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THE SAVIOUR'S PARTING PRAYER
FOR HIS DISCIPLES.



THE SAVIOUR'S PARTING PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES:

A Series of Chapters on our Lord's Intercessory Prayer.

BY

THE REV. W. LANDELS, D.D.

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THE GLORY OF THE FATHER AND THE SON.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee : as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him."—JOHN xvii. 1, 2.

THE prayer which is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" is less entitled to the designation than that contained in this chapter. The "Paternoster" is, indeed, His, in so far as He is its author ; but not His by His use of it. It was not a prayer which He could breathe ; for some of its petitions obviously do not become the lips of One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Beautiful and comprehensive as it is, and suited as it is to our state and condition, it is only a form, not to be rigidly observed, but to indicate generally the order and manner of our petitions, given for the guidance

of the disciples, who said, "Lord, teach us to pray," and to whom the Lord replied, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

The prayer before us is pre-eminently and emphatically His. It is the longest of His recorded prayers. It was uttered on an occasion of peculiar interest, and is expressive of some of His deepest feelings. It was on the eve of His agony, when His work on earth was approaching its crisis, and through death He was about to be glorified—when He was passing under the shadow of the cloud which was soon to break over Him in storm and tempest; and the waves of that sea of trouble, in which He was ultimately to be overwhelmed, were rolling at His feet—when the great purpose of His coming into the world was about to be accomplished. It was when He was about to leave His disciples alone in the world, like sheep without a shepherd in the midst of ravening wolves. It was a time, therefore, when His tender regard for them would be freely expressed, and when, in intimate communion with the Father, He would give unrestrained utterance to His own purposes and desires. And such are actually the characteristics of His prayer. Nowhere else do we find Him

speaking so intimately and freely to the Father. Nowhere else do we obtain such an insight into the relation He sustained, and the feelings He cherished towards His chosen ones. Nowhere else does He so clearly reveal Himself as the true brother in regard to His human nature, or the equal Son as regards the Divine. In other Scriptures testimony is, indeed, plainly borne to His fraternal feelings,—in this they are expressed in desires on behalf of His brethren which even the boldest of *them* would not have ventured to cherish. In other Scriptures testimony is borne to His Divinity,—but here it is expressed in the tone of equality in which, at the most solemn hour of His life, He addresses the Father. No surer proof of His brotherliness can be found than His desire that those who are His may fare as He fares. And what truer indication of His Divinity can there be than the tone in which He says, “Father, *I will* that those whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am,”—“Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee?”

The prayer is in harmony with the sermon. Both of them are among the most precious recorded

words which fell even from the lips of the Great Teacher. For the consolation they are fitted to minister to His people—for the far-reaching truths they reveal—for the insight they give us into His innermost feelings, they are absolutely unequalled. “There is no voice,” says Melancthon, “which has ever been heard either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered by the Son of God Himself.” “It has ever been regarded,” says another, “as the most precious jewel which the treasure of Holy Scripture contains. The Church has been want to refresh herself by it as of all the streams of living water the most abundant.” “It is,” says a third, “the climax and consummation of all His discourses, pressing nearest to heaven and most immediately breathing of its mysteries of a triumphant and serenely taught, *It is finished*, before the darkness of the Cross.”

Those who are fond of classification may view the sermon as being generally the utterance of His divinity; the prayer, of His humanity; for while the exercise of prayer is in itself human, the expression of a sense of want, the lofty authoritative utterances of the sermon are manifestly

divine. In the latter He speaks as one who has blessings to communicate; in the former, as one who has blessings to crave. And yet, as is obvious from what has been already remarked, this classification cannot be strictly maintained. Much of the language of the prayer is not such as a mortal could use. The claim to previous existence, an existence which antedates the world, and to glory with the Father even then—the claim to power (given indeed by the Father, but nevertheless power which He exercises) over all flesh, and the power to give eternal life to His disciples—these are utterly impossible to one who, in his essential nature, partakes only of our humanity, and indeed to any one whose attributes are limited or finite. He who uses such words moves in a sphere and belongs to an order of being immeasurably exalted above those of the loftiest creature of God.

It is human to pray, unquestionably; and we recognise in the fact of His prayer the proof of His essential humanity. But it is neither human nor finite to use in prayer such words as fell from His lips; and herein do we recognise His superhuman and superfinite greatness. And as to the difficulty which every one must feel of how a Being so great

can use the language of entreaty, it is not more formidable than the other difficulty of how a Being so essentially human can use language which implies the possession of such superhuman qualities. Both of them are embraced in that greatest mystery of all—the mystery of the divine and the human—combined in one person. To the belief of this, however, with all the difficulty it involves, we are shut up by the language now indicative of divinity and now of humanity, which this mysterious Being employs. You can account for it all only on the ground of His twofold nature. And if there be much in this which surpasses our comprehension, our objections to it will be obviated if we remember that this incomprehensibility is inseparable from the subject. “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.”

By the quickest and yet gentlest and most natural transition our Lord glides out of discourse into prayer. There seems to have been scarcely any pause between the conclusion of the one and the commencement of the other. The change appears to have been marked only by the uplifting of the eye. In one sentence He is looking at His

disciples and addressing them; in the next His eyes are raised heavenward, and He is speaking to His Father. He needed no other preparation; for to Him converse with the Father was always natural and always in season. Besides, He is at this time engaged in discourse which brings His thoughts very near to the Father, into whose immediate presence He is about to enter; and His heart is drawn out in sympathy for His disciples whom He is about to leave; and nothing is more natural than that, having encouraged them by His words, He should breathe into His Father's ear His tender regard for them, and His desires on their behalf.

While we do not attach much importance to one posture or attitude more than another—that being the best, to our thinking, which best accords with the feeling of the worshipper, and is most helpful to the perception of the invisible Presence—it is pertinent to remark that, while the downward glance is most appropriate to confession and self-abasement, our Lord's example may show that the upward glance is most becoming to filial confidence and love, even when along with these there is the expression of earnest entreaty. The

child looking up into its father's face reverently but without dread, seeking to catch his eye, and watching the expression of his countenance, seems best to represent the prayer of the filial soul. Not, indeed, that God is more above us than He is beneath and around, or that the locality of heaven is over our head, any more than it is under our feet and over the head of those who are dwellers at the antipodes. All such thought is at variance with the fact that in relation to any given point of space our position periodically changes. The upward look, therefore, is rather a personal instinct than the result of any local consideration. It accords with our nature's conformation and tendencies, and is an instinctive recognition of the superiority of the Being to whom we make our appeal. The eye would be as much directed Godwards did we look below or beyond or within, as it is when we look above ; but as we are constituted, our reverence and love and entreaty and confidence are best expressed by the lifted eye. And, moreover, the mind is aided in the realization of the Divine when the eye looks into infinite space. Hence, in our most impromptu and ejaculatory prayer — the prayer

which is least premeditated—the eye is generally raised, and oftentimes the prayer itself is not more than the appeal which is presented to the Divine Being by the “upward glancing of an eye, when none but God is near,” or when surrounded with our neighbours, we, in this way, turn from others and look to Him.

But all this, as we have intimated, is of but small consequence. All postures and attitudes are best determined by the feeling of the worshipper. Whether it be the open or the closed eye, the upturned or the downturned countenance, the erect posture or the bent knee, that is best in which men can most devoutly and profitably pray—with the most vivid realization of the Divine presence, and the most efficient fostering and free outpouring of the feeling of devotion. The great and essential thing is that, as in the Saviour’s case, the heart should speak, and unreservedly pour out its feelings and desires into its Father’s ear.

Although the opening words testify to the solemn nature of the crisis in which the prayer is uttered, the calmness of our Lord throughout the prayer is most remarkable. “The hour is come,”

He says—that hour to which He again and again refers, because of its awfully momentous nature. Gethsemane was just at hand with all its mysterious anguish. The bitter cup was already at His lips. Before the morning He would be in the hands of His enemies, betrayed by one of His disciples, denied by another, forsaken of all the rest. Before the sun had again risen and set, He would have breathed His last, and in the short interval would have taken place the mock trial, the spitting and the buffetting and the scourging, and the cruel mockery of Herod and his men of war, the scenes on the way to Calvary, the driving of the nails, the erection of the cross, the darkness and the desertion and the lingering agony, until He cried, “It is finished,” and yielded up His soul to God. And yet, in this awful hour, He is as calm as He has ever been at any previous period of His life. There is no shrinking from the bitter trial—no feeling of solicitude for Himself expressed—no indication that what is before Him has come upon Him by surprise, and that He is resolutely making up His mind to bear what He has suddenly discovered cannot be avoided. There is no such feeling evinced in all the prayer. His own soul is undis-

turbed and unruffled. He speaks in the most assured manner, with all the position present to His mind, and His intercourse with the Father unclouded and intimate. Recent occurrences lead to no appeal for help of which previously He had not felt the need. He has no provision to make for unforeseen contingencies which have suddenly arisen. He only asks that the great purpose of His mission may be fulfilled—that the plan which has been so long in developing may now be consummated. He asks mainly for His people, not for Himself; and though He does ask that He may be glorified, it is not for Himself alone, but because of the relation of His glorification to the salvation of His people, and the glory which redounds to the Father in consequence thereof. It is a truly high priestly prayer—a prayer of intercession mainly for those whom He is about to leave; and, offered as it was at that solemn juncture of His history, it is prophetic of the blessings which He secures for His people, now that He is exalted to His father's right hand.

His calmness and composure are significant as bearing testimony to His true character and

work. He could not address God in such manner had He either committed mistakes or practised deception. He could not say so calmly and confidently, "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee," if He were not God's Son, as no other man or creature is. His prayer at such a juncture has something of the nature of an oath. It is a solemn appeal to God in vindication of all the claims He has put forth. "A final testimony to Himself on the part of the Son, uttered before the Father, and to the Father Himself alone; a most sacred and *pleading* expression of the inmost reality of that self-consciousness with which He alone knew who Himself was, one with the One above in heaven, A more awful and convincing attestation to the listening disciples, and to all Christian men who hear while they read, and read while they hear, than any *Ἀμῆν*, *Ἀμῆν*, which could fall from His lips, than any oath which might attest this. I, Jesus, am He, the Christ, the *Son* of the Blessed '*Father!*'—this is the testimony of the Son. '*Father!*' Thou knowest Me! Thou understandest Me! Righteous Father! the world knoweth Thee not, *but I know Thee!*—thus testifies the *Son.*" (Stier).

On the structure and style of the prayer we have little remark to offer. To divide it formally and rigidly into so many parts seems scarcely desirable since emotion more than logic determines the order which prayer assumes. Any one can see how in the first five verses His prayer relates specially to Himself, although it contains an explanatory statement as to the source or nature of that eternal life which He gives to His people—how from there He begins to speak of His disciples, and to offer prayer for them, confining His petitions at first to the small circle of those who are already His, then extending it to those who shall believe through their instrumentality, and ultimately glancing at the world, and the advantages it may derive from the prayers He has offered for His people—how, finally, He raises His thoughts to the glory which He desires His people to share, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Of its style we scarcely dare speak, lest we should verge on the profane in subjecting to criticism that which is so sacred ; nor would we offer a remark were it not that the more attention is called to the prayer the more does it excite the admiration of the reader for its combination of sim-

plicity of language with profundity of thought. "The Lord manifestly would be understood, and therefore speaks of the highest mysteries with such marvellous plainness of speech, as is never found in the Gnostic or Speculatist, and can never be attained even by His servants praying through His Spirit in His name. So high is its strain that none has ever approached it since; and yet the words are so child-like that children find their instruction, and edification, and comfort in them. . . . We can form some slight conception of the intensity of emotion with which the human heart of our Lord would at this crisis vibrate to the truth, the essential reality of the things of which He spoke; and hence the discourse which utters them bubbles forth as a gushing stream. And, again, what majestic repose there is, what luminous transparency of the thoughts, one flowing from the other in adjusted order, all forming one connected development, and for the most part each either the explanation of what precedes it, or a further deduction of its consequences." Even in its style it is marvellous. The transcendent thoughts flow out in clear and connected utterance; and words of child-like simplicity convey the

profoundest and most pregnant meanings. We say not that it is a model style, for in prayer it is not style that is of value, but the entrance of the heart into our petitions. He whose feelings are most in harmony with the spirit of this prayer will approach it most closely in style, albeit he can never hope to equal it. Its language is suited to our Lord alone. It is His own throughout. And it is a matter for thankfulness that though we cannot copy it, we have preserved to us a specimen of how, in the intimacy of communion, He addressed the Father.

“Father, glorify Thy Son.” What a strange petition it is as looked at from a human point of view, or as compared with those which we are accustomed to offer. *Help me, Forgive me, Save me, Be merciful to me*, are the requests which usually proceed from the lips of men, and especially as they contemplate and draw near to the close of life. But this great Pleader, craves no such boon. He has no mistakes to acknowledge, nor sin to confess, and therefore does not say, *Forgive me!* He apprehends no danger, and therefore does not say, *Save me!* He feels no weakness, and is mastered by no difficulty,

and therefore does not say, *Help me!* He is conscious of no evil deserts, and therefore does not say, *Be merciful to me!* But contemplating His completed course, and realising His equality with the Father, He calmly and confidently says, *Glorify Me!* And He says this in order that He may reciprocate the service. He desires for Himself that which He desires for the Father; and He desires it for Himself in order that it may redound to the Father through Him. “*Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.*”

In the second verse it is intimated that this petition accords with the great purpose of His mission, and light is there shed on the manner in which He desires to be glorified that the Father may be glorified through Him. “*As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.*” The thought here appears to be this:—He had been appointed to sustain a relation to our fallen, depraved, ruined humanity. He was empowered to appear and suffer as its Representative, in order that He might give eternal life to those members of it who should

become His. As its Representative, He is now about to suffer; and the glory which He asks for Himself is that this purpose of His mission may be fulfilled—that His offering of Himself may be accepted on behalf of the race—that God may make manifest His approval of His work, thereby vindicating His character from the aspersions of His adversaries, and attesting His ability to save—that thus, having power to raise men to the enjoyment of eternal life, God may be glorified through the everlasting salvation of all who are His.

The salvation of men glorifies the Father, not only from their being raised to take direct part in the services of the upper sanctuary—so many once rebellious men being brought to reverence and extol the Divine perfections—but through the manner in which the Divine perfections have been exercised and displayed in placing them where and making them what they are. As an artist is glorified through the productions of his genius attesting the lofty qualities with which he was endowed, so the presence of men in heaven who were once rebellious, and are now pardoned and redeemed from all evil, is an everlasting testimony

to the Divine goodness, by which other intelligences are reminded of the condescension that goodness has shown, and the sacrifices it has made, and the wisdom it has exercised in bringing to pass the blessed result. Thus by giving eternal life to His people Jesus glorifies the Father.

Jesus Himself was glorified by the testimony which the Father bore to His mission, when He supported Him under His suffering, and sent angels to strengthen His shrinking humanity, and caused Nature to give signs of sympathy; when He declared His acceptance and approval of His work by His resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high. This enabled Him to give eternal life to men, and thereby to glorify the Father. Thus was the opening petition of His prayer granted:—“Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.”

Without entering further on the consideration of the prayer at present, we may profitably pause

here, and reflect on the glorious privilege and security of those who receive Christ. Their eternal life is here seen to have had a most prominent place in the Divine mind and the Divine councils, while it is most intimately connected with the glory both of the Father and the Son. Well may we ask—What can deprive them of life of whom all this is predicated, who are the object of all the transactions referred to or recorded here? That eternal life might be secured to them was the purpose for which the Father sent the Son on His mission of mercy. The Son pleads for their eternal life, and in pleading appeals to the Father's purpose. The Son is glorified that they may have life, and the Father is glorified because life is theirs. Here there is a fourfold guarantee that Christ's sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. That purpose of the Father in sending His Son cannot be foregone. That earnest desire of the Son expressed in this pleading cannot be frustrated. That cannot be destroyed which was secured by the glorification of the Son and is identified with the glory of the Father. And it is right and dutiful

that we who have put our trust in Christ should weigh all these considerations as grounds for the assurance which we have a right to cherish. And as, realising the safety of our state and the glory of our prospect, our hearts swell with gratitude for all that God has done for us, be it ours to express that gratitude, not with the lip only, but in acts of devoted service, through which we seek to make others partakers of eternal life, that God may be glorified in them as in us. Let us not receive without giving in turn to others. Let us not be content with merely exulting in our own blissful prospect, when there are those around us living without God, and without hope, in whose everlasting life our Father may be glorified no less than in our own.

And is there not here also a word of warning for others ? The Saviour has power over all flesh, though He only raises to the enjoyment of eternal life those who are His own. What does that power mean ? What does it foretell ? If He has died for them, and they do not live in consequence, must they not receive a sorcer punishment ? His death cannot be without effect in making men's condition better or worse. It

was too momentous an event for that. And if men will not come to Him that they may have life, we must forewarn them, that they will be doomed to endure a death more bitter and awful than if Christ had not died. They are counted worthy of a sorcer punishment, "who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an un-holy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace!"



ETERNAL LIFE—ITS SOURCE AND ITS ESSENCE.

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."—JOHN xvii. 3.

ONE of the titles by which prophecy designates our Lord, is the *Desire of all Nations*. It thereby intimates that humanity's longings would be satisfied, and its questions answered, in Him. While He supplied, in His person and work, what the world's sin and misery rendered necessary to its welfare, His teaching furnishes an answer to all the great questions relating to the spiritual and future world which have agitated the minds of men.

The sentence before us is a fair illustration of the pregnancy of His words. The old question as to man's future existence,—in which the nations have cherished an instinctive hope, dimly

shadowed forth in their mythologies, and Valhallas, and Elysian fields, and happy hunting grounds; of which, however, the most thoughtful have often stood in doubt, and in which the most sanguine have had no well-founded belief,—is answered here. The modern question as to what constitutes eternal life—whether it be merely eternal conscious existence, or whether to existence bliss must be superadded to make it worthy of the name of life—is answered with equal clearness. Even the perpetual question which throughout all ages has, in one form or other, occupied sincere seekers after salvation—How shall a man be just with God? How may a sinful creature, who has forfeited the Divine favour, rise to the enjoyment of everlasting life? What must I do to be saved?—is clearly and authoritatively answered, so that no inquirer who reads our Lord's utterance need be at a loss as to the course it behoves him to pursue. The dream of the wisest heathens is substantially verified—the question of the controversialist as to the meaning of eternal life is settled—and the inquiry of the awakened soul is answered—in these pregnant words, “This is life eternal, that they might know

Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

While the distinction which our Lord seems here to draw between the true God and Himself is pleaded by some as an argument adverse to His Divinity, others with better reason find satisfactory evidence that He is Divine, in the manner in which He couples the knowledge of the true God with the knowledge of Himself, as if both were equally important, and equally—to the same extent and in the same manner—connected with eternal life. No mere man, although most undoubtedly the bearer of a Divine mission, such as Moses or Paul, ever speaks, or can speak, of Himself in such manner. He who thus couples Himself with the Divine Being manifestly lays claim to Divine honours; and in declaring God to be the only and the true God, He does not exclude Himself, but the world and the false gods, which it invents. In regard to everything out of the Godhead He testifies to the Divine unity; but in that Godhead He includes Himself, as participator in the essence and honour of the one only God, when He makes the knowledge of Himself, in common with the knowledge of

the Father, one with eternal life. Justly does Luther say, "Since He bases eternal life upon the knowledge of Himself with the Father, and says that without the knowledge of Him no man can attain unto eternal life, and thus that it is one and the same knowledge by which He and the Father are known, He must perforce be of the same essence and nature with the Father; that is, He must be the self-same true God, yet a person distinguished from the Father." It will thus be seen that this very text, which is supposed to be hostile to, is regarded by some as establishing, our Lord's Divinity; and, without doubt, it presents a real and very formidable difficulty to the expositor who does not believe Him to be Divine.

Does our Lord here simply point out the way to life, or the means by which it may be obtained? That He does this much is obvious. For if the knowledge of God and Christ be eternal life, the way to attain to eternal life is clearly by the acquisition of such knowledge. And it would be no misuse of our Saviour's words were they employed to enforce this truth. They would so far chime in with those other scriptures in which knowledge is connected with salvation.

To limit His meaning to this, however, would be giving to His words a too superficial interpretation. While they mean all this, they at the same time convey a profounder truth. It is not that the knowledge of God and of Christ is the way to life, but that that knowledge itself constitutes eternal life. It is such an essential part of the life, that eternal existence would not be eternal life without it, and that with it no being, however situated, could be robbed of life's essential joy. Knowing God and Christ, a man would enjoy heaven's bliss in whatever locality and under whatever circumstances he might be placed. Ignorant of God and of Christ, he would, by reason of his nature's wants, although surrounded with the scenery and associations of heaven, be tortured with the essential wretchedness of hell.

And what are we to understand by this knowledge of God and of Christ? Is it simply that knowledge which is acquired by the hearing of the ear, or through an outward perception of the revelation given us in God's Word? When we have discerned the fact of the Divine existence, and have a correct theoretical acquaintance with the Divine attributes, and an accurate

knowledge of the nature and history of our Lord, have we attained to that knowledge of God and Christ which constitutes eternal life ? All this, we say again, is doubtless included in this knowledge. There can be no acquaintance with God where the fact of His existence is not distinctly recognised. Neither can He be known where men are ignorant of His natural attributes, such as His Omnipotence, and Omnipresence, and Omniscience. They have no adequate conception of Him who practically regard Him as limited in any of these qualities of His nature, who have not the clear and habitual conviction of His infinitude. Equally far are they from this knowledge who do not see the perfection and glory of His moral character—that in all that constitutes moral excellence, in wisdom, in faithfulness, in purity, in justice, and in goodness, He rises infinitely above the loftiest conception of His creatures. Neither can any one be said to have the knowledge of Christ, who is not acquainted with His history as recorded in the Gospels. The believing recognition of what is there stated concerning Him, is the rudimentary part or basis of whatever higher knowledge may be intended in the text. And whatever preten-

sions to intuitive discernment may be put forth by those who are not dependent, as they say, on a "book revelation," it is certain that, until they have learned from the book, they are as ignorant of Christ as the most benighted heathen, and do not even know that such a person ever lived.

But while all this is as true, it is at the same time as superficial, as that interpretation of the text which we have just passed in review. It is true; but it is only a small portion of the truth which the text presents. The knowledge intended by our Lord is more intimate, and profound, and lofty, than that merely outward knowledge which may be obtained through the hearing or the study of any declaration or revelation whatsoever. Knowing a person is a different thing from knowing about a person, even though the latter knowledge should embrace every trait of his character and every fact of his history. A man who knows another may describe him to you most accurately, and you may perfectly comprehend his description, but you cannot therefore be said to know the man. Most of us know something of Julius Cæsar, *e.g.*, his doings and surroundings, his talents and his character, but

we do not, even in smallest measure, know him. And so to learn about Jesus Christ from external sources is no more to know Him, than to read Cæsar's history is to know Cæsar himself. The outside of the man—even the utterances of the man—are not himself, nor does an acquaintance with *them* imply that *he* is known. And to know God and Christ is a different thing from knowing any revelation of them which can possibly be given.

To know a man thoroughly you must commune with him. In the intercourse of intimacy and friendship, soul reveals itself to soul, so that one gets to know another in this way as he never could through any other medium. Looks, and tones, and manner, reveal more of feeling than words can; and he who has opportunity of observing these obtains the best insight into character. Sympathy, such as pleasant intercourse awakens, is the surest interpreter of another's feelings. We can best know what a man feels and is, when we have fellow-feeling with him. So much is this the case, that the lack of such feeling is often felt as a barrier to free utterance, because one does not care to express his feelings

to another who has so little in common with him that he is almost sure to misunderstand what he says. Whereas, if there be but similarity of feeling, few words are necessary to make the understanding perfect. Even broken utterances become intelligible, and expressions which seem capable of diverse rendering are correctly apprehended by the sympathising soul. The man's acts may for the time be strangely inexplicable to onlookers, and the only conclusion they admit of in their minds may be one unfavourable to himself; but his friend who, by sympathetic cordial intercourse, has got to know what is in his heart, will give them, notwithstanding their strange appearance, no unfavourable construction, because such construction would be at variance with his knowledge of the man. A man will be convicted of some monstrous crime. The evidence against him is most conclusive. Credible witnesses bear testimony on oath, which leaves the jury no alternative but to pronounce him guilty. He has nothing to say for himself, circumstances sealing his lips lest others should be compromised by explanations which he alone can give. But though disinterested observers

are satisfied that the evidence adduced admitted of no other verdict, neither wife, nor mother, nor friend, will concur in it, because, through long-continued cordial and sympathetic intercourse, they know the man, and are assured that he is not capable of committing the crime with which he has been charged. Others see his form, and hear his voice, and can testify to his movements. To them, in the intimacy of their communion, his heart has been revealed. And their faith in him, which cannot be shaken by the most direct and conclusive evidence, is, when all things are made plain, justified by the result.

In like manner, the knowledge of God means something more than an acquaintance with His Word and works, such as may be obtained even by their devout and careful study. It means that acquaintance with Himself which comes through heart-intercourse with Him, and is possible only to the soul whose thoughts and feelings are somewhat in harmony with His own —the soul to which, through its sympathy or unison with Him, He is able to reveal Himself. Such a soul knows Him as He never can be known through any objective revelation. Its in-

tercourse with God lifts it into a state in which the veil falls from its eyes; glorious light flashes on it; and by an intuitive discernment, with which words and forms have nothing to do, it sees God—sees not the garment in which He clothes Himself, nor the objective revelation which obscures while it reveals His brightness, but sees *Him*, and knows Him as it knows its most intimate friend—knows that this is indeed He and none other—that not its former conceptions, which were vague and partial, but this glorious vision, is God. It sees Him and is enraptured with the sight; puts forth its arms to embrace Him; finds in Him its rest, its satisfying portion, its unspeakable delight. Oh, how different now from what it was, when it was slowly forming its conception of God from His Word and works, making little progress, because, however carefully it studied these, and however correctly it interpreted, and however firmly it believed, it had no sight, could not—as we often hear inquirers complain—realise the Divine! Then it could only think of God, and feel after Him, and try to imagine what kind of Being He was; but could not see, had no realisation either of His presence or

His existence, and still less of His character; pictured to itself the bodily form of Jesus Christ, and kept that form in its eye when it engaged in exercises of devotion, but had no clear apprehension of the Divine. Now it sees God, and rejoices in Him, and walks with Him, and speaks to Him—speaks with the full consciousness that He hears,—speaks, not irreverently, but intimately, as a man with his friend. Now it knows something of the meaning of those scriptures, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;” “The pure in heart see God.” It knows by a blessed experience the truth of our Saviour’s words, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

We know well how imperfectly we have explained this branch of our subject; but we also know how difficult it is to explain it, except to those who understand it already, and to whom, therefore, little explanation is required. The same thing may be said of that which remains to be noticed—the connection between this knowledge and eternal life. To trace this fully, is quite beyond our power: we can only hope that where

it is realised the experience of Christians will harmonise with our statements, as we present a few thoughts which may partially elucidate our Saviour's words.

1. Consider how the knowledge of God satisfies and delights the soul. Fallen as we are, the instincts of our nature demand an infinite excellence to satisfy their craving. Goodness which we can measure is not a goodness which we can properly worship; because goodness which we can measure is capable of being surpassed, and the true feeling of worship is destroyed the moment we can imagine a superior goodness to that to which our homage is paid. For true worship consists of the soul's adoring recognition, not only of the superiority, but of the unsurpassable perfection, of its object. Hence our worshshipping tendency is a proof that the soul has been made for God, and can find its proper rest and sphere only in Him. However much it may become engrossed with inferior objects, it cannot ultimately rest in them. The very attempt to be satisfied with them is a perversion of its powers, which can end only in degradation and disappointment. Either it will destroy itself by sinking

itself to their level, if they are beneath it; or it will exhaust them and throw them away—as a child throws away an orange-skin when it has sucked it empty—injuring itself meanwhile by the process, and leaving itself dissatisfied and wretched. Now, God is the sum of all excellence. The soul can find what is necessary to give scope and gratification to its worshipping instinct only in Him. And it finds it so soon as, and just to the extent to which, God is known. In Him all its loftiest desires and aspirations are satisfied. For the soul that knows God, knows not only the best of existent beings, but a better Being than it can imagine. It beholds in Him a matchless and infinite Excellence—a Being worthy of its profoundest homage and most devoted service—a Being whom it can love and adore with all the force, and fervour, and faculty of its nature, without lowering itself or feeling itself lowered by its choice—and a Being who, throughout all the stages of its advancement, will be infinitely superior to itself—a Being whose service is its highest honour, and whose friendship its ecstatic delight. It thus finds in the God whom it knows its proper centre and sphere.

All its desires are gratified in Him. And in this sense—if in no other—the knowledge of God is eternal life.

2. In further illustration of our Saviour's words, consider how the knowledge of God quickens and animates the soul. "While ignorant of God, it is dead, inasmuch as the faculties which qualify it for loving, and adoring, and enjoying Him—the noblest faculties with which it has been endowed—are never exercised. As the limb is dead which moves not and has no sensation, so the soul is dead when its faculties are dormant and it feels no proper emotion in view of the Divine Being. It is like a stagnant pool, which no breeze stirs, and whose putrid waters reflect no shadow. It yields not to the influences of the Divine Spirit. It cherishes none of those devout emotions which the thought of God should excite. It receives no sensible impression from any manifestation of His character. But when it knows God and Jesus Christ, those dormant faculties are quickened into activity. Reaching forth toward God, and laying hold of His perfections, they love, adore, and enjoy Him. As when the dead limb begins to

perform the functions and to feel the throbings and sensations of life, so those higher powers of the soul, which lay wrapped in a state of insensibility and inaction, are now exercised toward God, and are thrilling with the sensations, and heaving with the emotions, of spiritual life. The stagnant pool has become a lake of living waters, tremulous under every breeze, and reflecting in its lucid depths every feature of the surrounding hills and the over-arching sky. The once dead soul has received the impression and is now reflecting the features of the Divine character; it moves responsively under the influences of the Divine Spirit, and in obedience to the intimations of the Divine will. Formerly, but a part of the man was alive, and that the least noble part. The animal part was active, and perhaps the intellectual; but the religious, which is higher than either, had no life and no action, or only the galvanic action of a corpse. But now, this nobler part of his nature is exercised. The man has entered on a higher life than he previously enjoyed—a life more worthy of his lofty capabilities as a man—a life which death does not destroy, but strengthens and elevates, by the

removal of all obstacles to its development, and by its translation to more favourable scenes; and which, continuing and progressing throughout the ages, and being measured by the life of Him who is its Author, may be justly said to be eternal in its duration." In this sense also the knowledge of God constitutes eternal life.

3. As our final illustration of our Saviour's words, consider how the knowledge of God elevates and expands the soul. If to grow be a characteristic of life, as is generally believed, we may find some light shed on our text by the fact that the knowledge of God provides for and necessitates the unceasing and limitless growth of the soul by which it is possessed. Finding in that knowledge so much satisfaction and delight, the desire to have it increased will naturally become its one absorbing passion, under the influence of which it will press on to know, through His words and works, and especially through communion with Himself, more and more of God. And as God is infinite and can never be fully comprehended, this progress in knowledge and enjoyment will go on for ever. It is said—and from our own limited experience we can well believe it—that when you climb an Alpine

mountain in a clear winter night, although you are actually getting nearer to the stars, it does not so appear to your wondering eye. The worlds indeed wax in size and brilliance; but as you look up into infinite space they appear to recede to a greater distance at each stage of your ascent, as if mocking all your efforts to reach them. And as we advance in our knowledge of God, our impression is not that we are about to comprehend Him, but rather a growing conviction that there are profounder depths of His nature, greater riches of His perfections, still to be disclosed. And thus shall we press on to know Him endlessly—our enjoyment increasing; our capacities expanding and strengthening; a fuller, stronger, quicker tide of life coursing through all our being; and our experience furnishing new illustration and corroboration of the words of our Lord, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”



THE FINISHED WORK AND ITS REWARD.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."—*JOHN xvii. 4, 5.*

IN the second verse the Saviour prays that the Father may glorify Him, in order that He may also glorify the Father; and here He speaks as if this purpose in relation to the Father were already realised, and His work on earth done—as if He had already glorified the Father, and it only remained that the Father, in return, and as the reward of His work, should glorify Him.

The apparent discrepancy is, however, easily explained. The prayer itself shows in what sense the words before us are to be understood.

Their explanation is found in the state of the Saviour's own mind. He is not looking back merely on what has actually been done, but forward

to that which is about to be accomplished, of which what had already taken place was the infallible pledge, and speaking of it by anticipation. Whether it be from His Divine prescience, or because "the spirit of prayer so elevates Him" that He "describes the work *upon earth* as if He was already lifted up from the earth and looking back upon it from heaven," it is certain that both here and in v. 11, He speaks of that which is about to be as if it already were. Although still here, He says in that verse, "And now I am no more in the world;" and although some of His work yet remains to be done, in the words before us He says, in the same spirit of anticipation, "I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

The glory of God, the Scriptures give us to understand, consists less of His natural than of His moral attributes. When, in answer to the prayer of Moses, He promises to reveal His glory, it is not His natural greatness which is the subject of the promise, but His moral excellence. "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,

long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." His power is indeed associated with His glory, as where we read of "the glory of His power." But it is not power, in itself considered, which makes any being glorious, but power beneficently employed. God is glorious in His power, not simply because His power is great, but because His great power is allied to infinite goodness, and directed by infinite wisdom to just and benevolent ends.

To glorify God, is to make manifest His infinite excellence. How this was accomplished by the mission of our Lord, is manifest to every one who has an intelligent perception of His history. While He wielded Divine power, He showed both by His teaching and His miracles how beneficent that power is in its working—that it is no blind fate which controls and determines our human affairs, but a loving tender Father—one who numbers the hairs of our head and makes provision for our daily wants—whose feelings towards rebellious men are like the yearnings of a father over a prodigal son. In His own person Divine power was moving about among men, scattering benisons on every hand—ministering to diseased bodies and distressed

souls; rescuing men from the thraldom of the devil and the dominion of death; standing by the graves of humanity with a tear of pity in its eye and with words of authority on its lips; bidding the dead arise, and therein giving earnest of the resurrection of the race; compelling the obedience of evil spirits, and breaking the power with which they tyrannised over the bodies and the souls of men; employing the forces of nature to minister to human wants; and, by the restoration of lost faculties, and the impartation of health where all medical skill had been baffled, and all human appliances had failed, shedding joy through manifold hearts and homes, so that men were led at once to recognise the Divine power and the equally Divine benevolence with which that power was allied.

By these and other means He made manifest the essential and infinite goodness of the Divine nature. All the qualities which were proclaimed to Moses as constituting the Divine glory, were, in His life, and sufferings, and death, most conspicuously displayed—the mercy, the grace, the long-suffering, the faithfulness, and the abundant goodness. His very coming was a proof of the Father's

interest in His rebellious creatures—His readiness, His desire, to receive them into His favour. Of this all the gracious and persuasive words He uttered, all the beneficent acts He performed, furnished additional illustration and corroborative proof. And the most impressive manifestation of all was given in His self-sacrificing life and vicarious death. For what could more clearly prove and illustrate the Divine love, than that He—the Father's equal—should come, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many,” should “humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”—that He, the offended Creator, should descend so far, and submit to and endure so much, in order to secure the reconciliation of the offending creature? From time immemorial, no greater love hath been known “than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends;” “but God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” No more convincing proof of immeasurable love can be given; and to the end of time this will remain on record as the most conclusive evidence and clearest manifestation of the Divine love for the race—

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

But the love of God is not the only moral attribute which is manifested in the life and death of Christ. Testimony is also borne thereby to His rectitude and faithfulness, and indeed to all His moral attributes. While His wisdom is heard speaking in our Saviour's utterances, and seen in the devising of such a scheme for the recovery of His rebellious creatures, and the amazing adaptation of the Cross of Christ to the end contemplated therein, that Cross testifies to the universe of the justice and faithfulness which characterise all God's dealings with His creatures. By no arbitrary law has He sought to govern the intelligent universe, but by one which is essential to its welfare—one which cannot on any account be set aside; for, lo! the Son of God, in dying, does homage thereunto. No greater tribute could be paid to it than when He, in His obedience to it, poured out His own heart's blood. Nothing could more clearly show God's faithfulness in issuing such a law—His desire for the welfare of His creatures therein—the high regard He

has for it—His determination to uphold it—than that Christ voluntarily placed Himself under it, becoming “obedient unto death.” By so doing, “He has magnified the law, and made it honourable,” and declared God’s “righteousness in the remission of sins,” that He “might be just while He justifies the ungodly.” In this way all the Divine perfections have been manifested in Christ. More clearly than by any verbal or written revelation—more clearly than by the works of Nature and Providence—He has shown men what the Father is. And to reveal the Father is to glorify Him. To make known His perfections is to testify to His honour; for all His perfections are infinitely excellent. And even if the revelation were to be rejected by those to whom it was given, the Father would still be glorified. However men may treat Him, it is for the glory of the Father that His character has been so clearly manifested to the universe, and that at least a few devout and deserving souls have been enabled to say, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”

Not that this number will in the end be small. In one of the ancient prophecies it is foretold that He will cause many nations to exult; and that—after the fashion of victorious warriors among whom were divided the captives taken in battle—a great number of willing captives will be apportioned to Him for a spoil. And before the summing up of all things, John sees “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” Every one of that great multitude, voluntarily reclaimed from rebellion and restored to allegiance, transformed in character through Divine grace and set on high among the first-born sons of God, is an everlasting monument to the Divine honour. On them the inhabitants of other worlds than ours may look, and see how sinners are made ashamed of their rebellion when once the Divine character is known—how they become more eager to worship and to serve than ever they were prone to rebel, as if by the ardour of their love and zeal they would

compensate in some measure for their past misdeeds—how God's love sought their salvation and God's wisdom devised a plan for its accomplishment in accordance with the requirements of His righteous law—how that plan, at an infinite cost of condescension and suffering, has resulted in the eternal salvation of that innumerable multitude. And the sublime complacency of the eternal Father Himself, as He looks on their voluntary obedience to His once violated law, on the adoring homage of those who were once His enemies, on the restoration of His defaced image, will be the fitting response to the testimony of the Son, “I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” For of all the works of God there is nothing which manifests so illustriously the Divine glory, as a revolted world voluntarily reconciled, and brought to move in holy harmony around the eternal throne.

The petition which follows the foregoing declaration is very lofty and bold in its request. The more it is considered, the more clearly will it be seen to testify, under the most solemn conditions, not only to the superhuman, but to the Divine, greatness of our Lord. We cannot conceive of any

such request coming from a creature's lips who was not insane or guilty of the most deliberate and daring blasphemy. It is altogether a mysterious thing that such a prayer should be offered. The exercise of prayer seems altogether at variance with such a request. He who dare ask such things for Himself, one would think, does not need to pray; and the only explanation is found in the twofold nature of the Pleader. Because He is human, He prays: because He is Divine, His prayer is such as no pleader before or since ever offered.

While the tone of the petition betokens no irreverence, but deep, ineffable love, there is in it the familiarity and confidence becoming only in one who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "I have glorified Thee." "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me." As if He had said, "I have finished what I undertook; now perform Thou Thy part of Our covenant. Do for Me as I have done for Thee." It is not so much the tone of one who pleads for a favour, as of one who claims a right, and who claims it with the confidence that it cannot be withheld. It is less like an entreaty than a reference to a compact to which the fulfilment of

one part is announced, in order that the fulfilment of the other may follow. The Divine Son speaks to the Divine Father of what They have mutually undertaken to do, and, testifying that His part is finished, asks, not as if the request were necessary, but in the confidence which exists between the Father and the Son, that the other may be accomplished.

But again we say, in the claim so familiarly and so confidently preferred, there is no lack of reverence. He who became our substitute is also our exemplar, and not more so in anything than in the spirit in which it behoves us to address the Father. His life was throughout a life of perfect submission to the Father's will, of perfect confidence in the Father's wisdom and goodness, of love to the Father so profound and mysterious that it far surpasses our finite comprehension. While His relation to the Father is peculiar to Himself, and the language in which He addresses Him is such as it becomes no creature to use, He breathed towards the Father a spirit to which the holiest men can only, in their devoutest moments, make the most distant approach. While to Him fear like ours was impossible, and He could not stand in awe, as we do, of a Majesty which He

shared, His ineffable regard for the Father's perfections, His unutterable love for the Father, His perfect confidence in the Father, were they shared in by us even after our own measure, would make our worship perfect—akin to that which is offered by the shining ones who surround the throne on high. Oh, there is no irreverence towards the Father in Him who utters the yet familiar words of this prayer! Never did seraphs, bowing before the throne, show such appreciation of the Divine perfections, as He who here converses with the Father as a man with his friend. His is such appreciation of the Divine excellence as it requires a Divine capacity to form. If, as the poet says, "God only knows the love of God," we may say with equal truth, "God Himself only knows how glorious the Divine perfections are."

Not only is there in our Lord's tone the familiarity of companionship, but in the petition which He offers He claims nothing less than an equality of glory with the Father. "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Oh, it seems to us as if a right appreciation of the nature of this Speaker were enough to silence all irreverent talk

as to what He is ; that in reading these words we should feel as if in presence of a mystery too sacred for discussion, which we can only contemplate with adoring wonder, and before which it behoves us to prostrate ourselves, confessing our inability to fully understand, yet not failing to pay to Him the homage which is so manifestly His due ! “ *With Thine own Self!* ” Who is it that dares speak thus to the Eternal Father ? What creature could thus blasphemously think of being placed by His side ? Nay, what creature could bear to be a sharer in His glory ? Is any finite capacity equal to that ? Who could dare to usurp a place on the throne of the Infinite One ? If angels worship Him—if the seraphim in His presence veil their faces and their feet with their wings—if the cherubim bow before Him in lowly adoration—who is this that claims to share in His glory ? To what order of being does He belong ? How exalted must He be above all the principalities and powers in heavenly places ! Other beings think it honour enough to behold that glory. “ *I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,* ” was the utmost which Moses, the man of God, ventured to ask. And even that is as much as mortal can bear—more indeed than

they can bear who are not divinely sustained. Even creatures of higher order, as we have just seen, are so impressed with this glory that they contemplate it with veiled face, and give devout expression to the adoration it excites, crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory." And yet this Being asks not to see, but to share in, the glory. "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self." It is as if He said, "Put on Me Thine own vesture. Raise Me to Thine own elevation. Let Me shine with Thine own lustre. As Thine infinite excellence is worthy of the adoration of all Thy creatures, so let it be seen by all that this excellence is Mine—that in that which distinguishes Thee from all other beings I am one with Thee. I ask to be glorified with no inferior glory, but with Thy very own—'Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self.'"

The Saviour, in asking even for this glory, does not ask for that to which He is a stranger, but for that which He has already possessed. It is no presumption in Him to claim it, for it is his by right—His natural inheritance, which He enjoyed far back in the ages—"with the glory which I had

with Thee before the world was." Here is a claim to equality with the Father previously existing and recognised; and though now in part concealed, yet not relinquished or forfeited by His assumption of our humanity; but now to be reassumed when the purpose of His incarnation had been accomplished. His prayer in this does but contemplate His return to that from which He came, like the triumphant return of an heir who has gone forth from his natural inheritance on some difficult and important mission—not relinquishing his claim, but yet foregoing its advantages for a time, and purposing to return to it when his work is done.

Viewing Him as human merely, these words of His can have no meaning. They are purely and simply absurd. If the child that was born of Mary was not in point of nature distinguished from His brethren, it is impossible that He could speak of Himself as existing, and existing in glory, with the Father before the world was created. Nor do we escape the difficulty which His words present, by resorting to the notion,—for which we can see no ground in Scripture,—that the human soul of Christ existed prior to His incarnation; for it is not only pre-existence which His words assert,

but pre-enjoyment of equal glory with the Father—a thing which can never be true of any creature of God, for the glory of the finite is one, and the glory of the Infinite is another. Neither is it any relief from our difficulty to suppose, as some do, that He previously existed in angel form, and sustained a rank akin to the highest grade of angelic, or any other order of created, beings; for again the glory of such a being could not be spoken of as being the equal of the Father's.

Two things, then, are required of us by these words of our Lord: we must recognise His existence long prior to His appearance as a man; and we must recognise His glory both before and subsequent to His incarnation—a glory which does not belong to man or any other creature—a glory neither human nor finite, but a glory which belongs to the Father in common with Himself.

And yet it must not be overlooked that His humanity gives significance to His prayer. It is in His humanity that we must find the reason of that prayer. As God, He did not need to ask for the glory which was His own by inherent right, and had never been renounced. But He now contemplates the entrance on that glory of

the humanity which He has assumed. And for this He prays that He, the God-man, may be glorified with the glory which, as the Second Person of the Trinity, He enjoyed before the world was,—that the humanity which He has received into Himself, and made a part of His two-fold nature, blending in Himself the Divine and the human so that they form but one person, may, in His Person, be elevated to the glory which He previously enjoyed. This, we say, is the explanation of this most remarkable prayer. And it is no slight argument in favour of the so generally received doctrines of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and of the incarnation of the Divine in human form, that they thus explain language of our Lord's which, on any other hypothesis, seems to be quite inexplicable. Mystery may hover over the subject still, as may be expected where it is the Divine which engages our attention; but the mystery involves nothing which is absurd or contradictory. We cannot understand the mode of the Divine existence, or the nature of the union which links together the Divine and the human; but we can understand how a Being who was both Divine and human, might, when

His work on earth was accomplished, utter the prayer, "And now, Father, glorify Thou Me, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

The tendency of all this should be to exalt the Saviour in the estimation of His people, strengthening the feelings of those who already worship Him as Divine, giving faith to those who hesitate to trust in His saving love and power. The subject is neither impractical nor unprofitable, so far as it tends to this result. The great end of all Christian teaching should be to enhance their estimate of Christ who have already received Him, and to commend Him to those who have not. For, after all, the true test of character and infallible sign of destiny is this: What do men think of, and how are they related to, Christ? Whichever view of Christ may be the right one, we do not read the Scriptures aright if the view we form of Him is to be regarded as a matter of indifference. It is plainly enough taught there, that those who confide in Him are tending to glory, and those who reject Him to disgrace—the one to everlasting life, the other to everlasting death. He is the only Saviour of our humanity.

With Him we rise, without Him we fall. We deem it no vain thing, therefore, to set forth His glory. Our only regret is, that all our words come so far short of the transcendent theme. We can but feel that, when we have done our utmost, we have been labouring at an attempt in which we can only hope for the most limited success. For, when we speak of Him, it is the Divine and the Infinite with which we have to do. Oh, that the depth of our convictions might in some measure compensate for the feebleness of our words, and lead the reader to study for himself the representation of the Saviour's person and character which the Bible supplies! Our closing word must be this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."



THE FATHER'S GIFT TO THE SON.

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."—JOHN xvii. 5—8.

IN what goes before, the Saviour's prayer relates to Himself. Here, by a natural transition, it passes to His disciples. About to leave them, He is too much interested in them to be unmindful of their welfare, and in a peculiarly tender manner He breathes out His desire for them, omitting nothing in His request which was necessary to their being preserved from the evils to which His removal from them would leave them so much exposed,—to enable them rightly to fulfil their mission, and to secure their being

ultimately raised to behold, and in some sense to share in, the glory on which He was about to enter.

And yet, though His prayer passes from Himself to them, it still contemplates the same ultimate result. Both in what He asks for Himself and for them, He has in view the glory of the Father. He desires for Himself that He may be placed in a position and circumstances in which He may glorify the Father. He desires for His disciples their preservation, and union, and sanctification, and ultimate glorification, in order that the Father may be glorified in them.

His prayer for the disciples extends from the fifth to the nineteenth verse. After that, it embraces a wider circle,—“them also who shall believe on Me through their word;” and ultimately it extends indirectly to the world, for it contemplates the world’s faith in Himself as the result of the union of believers,—“that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

The prayer for the disciples may be said to be composed of petitions and pleas, not methodically arranged or kept very distinct from each other, but blended, as might be expected, in what is not

a logical, but a devout and emotional utterance. Nevertheless, he who looks into the prayer carefully will not have much difficulty in separating and classifying its different parts. The petitions are three, of which two are subordinate to the other. The great blessing sought for the disciples is *oneness* like that of the Father and the Son ; and in order to this the Saviour prays that they may be *kept*—kept from the evil that is in the world ; and not only kept, but *consecrated* or sanctified. These two things would both conduce to the union, which is the great object of the prayer. The petitions, then, as we have said, are these:—He prays for the *union*, the *conservation*, and the *consecration* of His disciples.

The pleas are much more numerous and various than the petitions. But, as a very judicious commentator remarks, “they may all be reduced under the following heads:—1. The persons prayed for are a peculiar class,—not the world. 2. They stand in peculiar relations both to the Father and the Son: they were the Father's, and were given to the Son, without ceasing to be the Father's also. 3. They have a peculiar character: they have believed and kept the Saviour's revela-

tion of the Father, and have thereby become transformed into the Saviour's likeness; so that they are not of the world, as He is not of the world. 4. They are called to peculiar work, by which Christ is to be glorified; for, having given them the Father's Word, He has sent them into the world as He Himself was sent by the Father.

5. Their circumstances were peculiar; for the Saviour who had kept them hitherto was now about to leave them in the midst of a hating and persecuting world. Finally, 6. The Lord had shown a peculiar regard for them, in consecrating Himself that they also might be consecrated to 'the great work in which they were to be engaged.' Such are the pleas by which He supports His petitions on behalf of His disciples.

The words in verses 6—8 contain a part of the pleading by which His petitions are enforced. He asks nothing for His disciples, as yet; but mentions what He has done for them, and how they have acted towards Him. And instead of treating His prayer for them in the methodical manner we have just indicated, we shall take the words as they stand; not, however, expounding them clause by clause, but rather seizing the principles they

contain, and offering, in the course of our illustration and argument, such explanatory remarks as may be required. At present our remarks will be confined to the following words in verse 6:—"I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me."

I. THE SAVIOUR REVEALS THE FATHER.—He has spoken of glorifying the Father, and now, as His mind reverts to His disciples, He naturally thinks of how He has done this already by revealing to them the Father's character. "I have manifested Thy name to the men which Thou gavest me out of the world."

The Father's Name denotes His character; and the Saviour, in His intercourse with His disciples, by His teaching and His life and His miraculous works, revealed this, if not in an aspect absolutely new, yet in a manner which far outshone all previous revelations. Under the old dispensation, although the mercy of God had been revealed, a degree of prominence was given to the sterner aspects of His character, such as does not appear in the representations given by our Lord. Nor did any previous revelation contain such a full-orbed

display of the Divine glory. It was reserved for the Son in His person, and by His works as well as His Word, to give that clear and full representation by which the Father was glorified. As Jehovah—the self-existent and everlasting one—God was worshipped by the saints of former ages; and into their worship there entered more of the awe which majesty excites than of the clinging confidence which mercy and grace attract. Whereas, Christ revealed Him clearly as THE FATHER, and taught men that the eternal existence was also the eternal love; that He was tender as His own Son in His dealings with His creatures; seeking their welfare continually, as He did who went about doing good; ready to receive the most loathsome and to pardon the worst; beseeching them to be reconciled, and waiting and welcoming their return to Himself, as a father the return of his prodigal son. His own coming was the result of the Father's desire to save the lost. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” He “came that men might have life, and have it more abundantly.” And in order to this, He “came

not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." This was the substance or essence of the revelation which Christ gave. He did not conceal that God was just. He did not deny that God could be angry. But He showed especially that God was love; and that even His justice was the justice of love, and His anger the anger of love. He did not conceal that God was a Ruler and a Judge. He bears unmistakable testimony both to the rule and to the judgment. Nowhere else, even in Scripture, can you find these more clearly revealed. But it is as "the Father" He chiefly speaks of Him. The word "Father" is most frequently on His lips. "The Father" is the ordinary designation which He applies to Him. This Fatherhood is the centre of all His attributes. From His paternal character and relation spring the functions both of the Ruler and the Judge.

Such, in our estimation, when rightly interpreted, is the manifestation of the Father which the Saviour has given—such the manifestation which is recorded in the Gospels. By this manifestation the Father was glorified; partly because it is the true view of the Divine character—the

view by which God is honoured—and partly because by this manifestation men are recovered from their alienation and reconciled to God. The Divine love is the great magnet by which God draws men's hearts to Himself. Faith in His love is the bond which unites them to Him, the mainspring of all the feelings of love and trust and submission, with which it behoves man to regard his Maker. The disciples—devout men and sincere men as they probably were before our Lord met with them—must, on understanding His revelation, have been like men coming out of twilight into sunshine, out of dim and uncertain wanderings into deep and settled repose. God's love revealed, as He revealed it, not only in words of unmistakable significance, but in tones of sympathetic tenderness, in tears of pity, in miraculous works for healing the diseases and supplying the wants of men, in telling the penitent of pardon, and expelling demons from the possessed—what joy it must have awakened—what devout adoration—what holy gratitude and confidence and love!—that the Eternal is our Father, cherishing for us all paternal feelings—our tenderest, and truest, as well as our Almighty Friend—though

just, yet ready to forgive, and able to forgive righteously because of His own provision of mercy. This is the most comforting and God-glorifying revelation which could be given. The hopes of humanity and the Divine glory are both identified with it. May we value it as the disciples did ! May we, like them, hold it fast for ourselves, and to the utmost of our ability guard it from the assaults of others ! May the Saviour have to say of us as of them—"They have kept My word!"

II. RIGHT FEELING TOWARDS GOD SECURES THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST. I found this proposition on the words, "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." It is true that men through the reception of Christ, are brought to feel rightly towards God. But it is also true, as these words show, that if, in those who have not yet become acquainted with the Saviour, there be a sincere seeking after God, and the service and worship of God be observed according to the light possessed, this state of mind will lead, as soon as they are presented, to a cordial recognition of the Saviour's claims.

In order to show that so much is implied in this part of our text, let it be observed—

1. That when the Saviour speaks of His disciples as belonging to the Father—"Thine they were"—He does not mean that they were His by absolute right, as all men and all creatures are; for in that sense there would have been nothing peculiar in their case, nor can we see how the Saviour could urge the fact as a plea in the support of His petitions.

2. That when the Saviour uses the words, "And Thou gavest them me," He does not refer to any transaction in which all the elect were given to Him by the Father. He is not speaking of all the elect, as may be seen from the context, but only of the Apostles, or at most of those who were already His disciples. He distinguishes expressly between them and *those who are yet to believe on Him through their word*. This limits His words at least to those who have already believed. And other expressions which are used incline us to the opinion that they are limited to the still narrower circle of those whom He had chosen to the apostolic office. He elsewhere in this epistle speaks of the *giving* as a thing which is still going on. "All that the Father giveth Me," He says,—not, "All that the Father hath

given," as is often read,"—"shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). The giving, according to this, is not a past transaction—something done in the councils of eternity; but a something which is still taking place in time. From all which it follows that the Saviour is not speaking of the body of the elect, given to Him in covenant by the Father, when He says, "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me;" and we must yet seek for some other explanation of His words.

3. That the most natural interpretation of the words—and we think the only possible interpretation—is, that they denote the state of the disciples' minds towards God, previous to their becoming the followers of Christ, and testify to their love to God and their sincere desire to serve Him. The manner in which they received the Saviour when He appeared—the readiness with which they responded to His call, "Follow me"—shows that their minds had been previously prepared for His reception. Some of them, we know, were disciples of John first. Of one of them it was said by our Lord, as He first approached him,

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” The conduct of them all, especially when viewed in connection with the words before us, would lead to the conclusion, that, profiting by the Old Testament revelation, and walking in its light, they were God-fearing men—godly ones, whom God, as the Psalmist says, had “set apart for Himself”—whose study of the prophecies led them to “wait for the consolation of Israel”—who, doing truth, came to the light when it appeared, “that their deeds might be made manifest that they were wrought in God,” and whose obedience enabled them to “know the doctrine whether it was of God.” They were the hearers who received the good seed of the kingdom which the Saviour scattered abroad, into good and honest hearts. They belonged to God as those who were not only Israel according to the flesh, but also according to the Spirit. Thus, being devout worshippers of the Father, they were by the Divine Spirit enabled to recognise, and prepared cordially to receive, the Son. And hence this testimony of our Lord: “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me,” as a plea for the prayer which He offers; for how could the Father fail to take care of His own

possessions—the men who in heart and life were devoted to Himself?

The case of Judas, no doubt, presents a difficulty, but it is not more formidable to this than to any other interpretation. He seems to be included in those who belonged to the Father and were given to the Son. But if this could not be true of him according to our sense of the words, still less could it be true of him if they are understood as referring to the gift by the Father to the Son of the whole body of the elect. The explanation we are inclined to adopt is, that even Judas, before the Saviour's appearing, had some seeds of good in him, which made him so far a worshipper of God, and disposed him to recognise Jesus as the Messiah; but that having to some extent received, he did not, like the others, *keep* Christ's Word, but yielded to his covetous propensities until all better feeling was eaten out by them, and he became the sacriligious thief, the miserable traitor, the son of perdition, the wretched victim of his own ungovernable lust.

If we are right in our interpretation, it is easy to see how these words support our proposition as to right feeling towards God securing the reception

of Christ. The giving of them by the Father to the Son is not merely an objective act, as if so much property were handed over from one to another, but a subjective process, by which they are disposed to become the disciples of Christ. In a chapter to which we have previously referred, the Saviour speaks of the Father as drawing to Him those whom He gives, and further describes the drawing as taking place through their hearing and learning of the Father. "No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John vi. 44, 45).

According to this, the Father's gift of men to Christ takes place through His preparing them for, and disposing them to, the reception of Christ; and this preparing and disposing process takes place in every one who is truly godly, or who cherishes anything like right feelings towards God.

Let us, with a view to the establishment of our proposition, consider what some of those right feelings are.

1. The man who is truly godly—who regards God with anything like right feeling—is contrite, sensible of his guilt and his consequent need of a Saviour. No man can be said to know his own relation to God, or to cherish the feelings which are proper thereunto, who is not sensible that he has grievously wronged his Maker, and is utterly unable without Divine help to render Him the love and homage and service which are His due; so that, unless there be some ground on which God can righteously forgive him, and some provision made by which the evil tendencies of his nature may be overcome, and his whole being brought into harmony with the Divine will, there is no hope for him.

Wherever such feeling exists, the Saviour, when presented, must be cordially embraced. The want of it is the greatest hindrance to His being received. Men have such an unworthy conception of God's character and claims, such a low standard of duty, that they are all but satisfied with their own lives. They have either no sense whatever, or but the slightest sense, of wrong. And, conscious of neither guilt nor defect, they feel no need of a Saviour. When Christ is set before them, there

is no more interest evinced than when water is set before a man who is not thirsty, or food before a man who has eaten to repletion, or when pardon is proclaimed to a citizen who has never been condemned. To try to move them by an exhibition of His attractions, is as futile as attempting to entertain the deaf with music, or hanging up paintings before the blind, or descanting on the beauties of poetry to a man whose soul has never risen above the dead level of prose. Eloquent as your expatiations may be, while that is your theme, they will not be charmed by the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. No patient is so difficult to cure as he who slighted every remedy because he fancies himself well. No disease so baffles the physician as those cases of mental disorder where men, deeming themselves to be what they are not, resist, in consequence of the delusion, the measures he prescribes. And never is the Gospel preached with so little efficiency as to men who, ignorant of God's character and claims, and of their own guilt and disorder, feel no need of the salvation which it brings.

All experience unites with Scripture in testifying that the awakening of this feeling is God's work.

It is not man but God who gives men to Christ ; and the awakening of this feeling is the first part of the process by which they are drawn to Him. For when God gives a man to see what is his true relation to Himself—when He unfolds the holiness of His character, and, tearing aside the veil, reveals to the sinner the abominable selfishness which rules in his own heart, and has characterised all his actions—when He thus lays His hand on the soul, and makes it feel the weight of His righteous displeasure—when He shows the man his own utter impotence, how unable he is to better his condition, that he is fast sinking into ruin even now, and that, unless another arm than his own shall rescue him, he will soon have reached a point where he is past recovery—when God does this, the man is no longer indifferent to the message which tells him of a Saviour. That message is grateful to him as the sound of water to the thirsty, or the proclamation of pardon to the condemned. The man has undergone the first part of the process which brings him to Christ.

2. Partly as the result of this feeling, God brings men into a child-like state of mind. No one can read the Gospels carefully without per-

ceiving how the absence of this operated as a barrier to the salvation of our Lord's countrymen. Hence the solemn assurance, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein." Hence the rebuke He ministers to the pride, which proved a hindrance to their faith: "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another?" Hence, too, His thankfulness, not that the Gospel was concealed from any, but was of such a nature, and revealed in such manner, that the simple-minded received it, while it was rejected by the wise in their own esteem: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The same hindrance operates not less powerfully still. Because of man's self-sufficiency and pride, he cherishes a strong repugnance to the humbling doctrines of the Cross. Hence, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Those who have something to glory in, whether it be their wisdom or their strength, are slow to acknowledge their utter helplessness, and to become entirely dependent on

another. This is the secret of much of the opposition offered to the Gospel by many of our scientific and learned men. The pursuits which foster self-sufficiency and pride of intellect, are not those which dispose men to bow as helpless sinners at the Saviour's feet, and to look for salvation to Him alone. Such men are just as far from God as they are indifferent to Christ. They have not experimentally learned what is the proper attitude of a man before his Maker. If they had, they would show a different spirit towards Him whom God has sent. For when a man knows his relation to God, first as a man and then as a sinner—when he is possessed of but the smallest modicum of the feeling with which he ought to regard God—he can no longer cherish any high thoughts of himself. Humility takes the place of pride. Self-reliance gives place to a feeling of entire dependence on another. And, willing to receive help on any terms, and to comply with any directions which God has given, he is ready to place himself, with all the abandonment of a little child, in the Saviour's hands.

3. Furthermore, God brings men to Christ by revealing the Saviour's adaptation to their need.

He who is brought to cherish right feelings towards God, is not only made sensible of his guilt and consequent need of pardon, of his weakness and consequent need of help, of his disordered state and consequent need of regenerating and transforming influences—all of which he finds in Christ ; but he has also a conception of the goodness after which he ought to aspire, if he is to please God and enjoy Him for ever. Such a man cannot have Christ revealed to him, without perceiving that He is possessed of all beautiful and excellent qualities, and being attracted towards Him on that account. In this way men's treatment of Christ reveals what is in themselves—whether good or evil be the soul of their character. It is vain to tell us that men love God, while they reject Him whom God hath sent. If they had any regard for God—any admiration of the qualities of the Divine nature—any right feeling towards God, they would most assuredly extend it to Him “ who is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” They cannot love the invisible One, and yet reject Him in whom the invisible One has manifested Himself. The vision of moral beauty and excellence which

is seen in the Saviour's person, attest to every sincere and devout heart whence it has come. Every truly godly soul must, whenever it is witnessed, be attracted by it as the needle to the pole. It will open its affections to embrace Him as the flower opens its petals to the sun. The affinity between its craving after goodness and the goodness which Christ presents, will make it move towards Christ and take hold of Him, so that the union between Him and it shall be close as when two drops of water touch and become one. It finds in Christ all that it sought and worshipped in God, and all in closer and more tender relation to itself; and hence, on seeing Him, it clasps Him in the arms of its faith and affection, saying, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." This is the true meaning of our Saviour's words, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them."



THE DISCERNMENT OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER AND CLAIMS.

"They have kept Thy Word. Now they have known that all things, whatsoever Thou hast given Me, are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."—JOHN xvii. 6—8.

IN our last paper we spoke of the manner in which Christ reveals the Father, and of right feeling towards God, preparing men for receiving Him whom God has sent to be the Saviour of the world. The remarks then made were founded on the words, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." The words which follow in the text touch on a kindred, though somewhat different subject; or rather they present the process which had taken

place in the disciples' minds in a somewhat different aspect. In the first part of the passage, it is taught that the relation of the disciples to God leads to their acceptance of Christ: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." In the latter part, their recognition of Christ's Divinity is connected with their receiving and keeping the Divine Word: "They have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou didst send Me." It is scarcely possible for a careful reader to mistake the connection of these different phrases, or to doubt that they make the disciples' reception of the Saviour's words the ground of their acquaintance with His character and mission. They perceived the Divine origin and nature of the Saviour's endowments: "Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee." They perceived also that the Father had sent Him on His mission: "They have known surely that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou didst send

Me." And the reason of this correct acquaintance and belief was their reception and retention of Christ's own revelation: "I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them;" and, furthermore, their having studied and believed and obeyed the Old Testament writings: "They have kept Thy Word."

The Saviour thus shows that if we would know who He is, and for what purpose He has come,—know and believe in Him as a Divine Saviour,—the proper course for us is to give heed to the inspired Word. It is not possible to study His utterances and the record of His life contained in the Gospels, especially in connection with other Scriptures, without finding evidence of His Divine character and benevolent mission, sufficient to satisfy every candid mind—evidence which it is exceedingly difficult to resist, and which, we hesitate not to say, leaves him who rejects it without excuse. Let men indulge their own speculations instead of consulting the Word of God,—let them, without reference to that word, presume to pronounce beforehand on the nature of the Godhead, and on what it is possible or impossible for God to do; and they are very likely to deny that He who

was so human as Jesus of Nazareth could also be Divine, and that He is a Saviour in any sense worthy of the name—a Saviour, except as He is a teacher and a pattern. Let them be absorbed in worldly pursuits and pleasures, so that God's revelation shall receive no share of their attention, and Jesus of Nazareth may be to them no more than other men ; like the Jews, they may think Him a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness, and see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. But let them come to that revelation with no preconceptions ; let them make it the subject of their careful and devout study ; let them treasure up in their memory, and dwell in thought on, its teaching ; let them candidly seek, by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting, to ascertain its meaning,—and they will not only find enough there to furnish a basis for their faith in the Divinity of our Lord, and their trust in Him as an all-sufficient Saviour, but they will find it extremely difficult to frame any theory which will satisfy themselves if His Divinity be not acknowledged. For they will find that to Him all Scripture bears testimony. To Him give all the prophets witness. He is prefigured in all types, nor have they any

meaning except as connected with Him. His advent is the culminating point of its history. All previous writings foretell, and prepare the way for, His coming; all subsequent writings bear testimony to the fact and the consequences of His having come. The evangelists record his life; the apostles expound His doctrines and enforce His claims. He has all Divine works attributed to Him, and is distinctly said to have exercised various Divine attributes. He is not only said to be God's equal, but is designated, "The Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God;" and in the closing book he is seen filling the throne of universal dominion, wielding all power in heaven and on earth, and receiving in common with the Father all Divine honours; for He is the Object of adoring homage to redeemed men, and to all the angelic hosts. And we may well ask how it is possible to read a book which bears such testimony—the only book from which we can learn anything of our Lord—apart from which we know nothing whatever concerning Him—how it is possible to read it, and receive it as God's own Word, to be received and held fast—how it is possible to do this, and not to see with the

early disciples that Christ was Divine—sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the world, and therefore worthy to be trusted by all who feel their need of salvation. We make apologies sometimes for unbelief. We are so candid, and so catholic, and so charitable withal, that, contrary to the teaching of Scripture, we try to think well of those by whom the Saviour is rejected. A great poet has sung the praises of doubt in language which is only too fascinating, and, though having some truth in it, apt to be abused by those who are disinclined to believe. As if we had no revelation, and were left to grope our way without Divine direction, he has thus described his feelings :—

“I falter where I firmly trod ;
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the world’s great altar stairs,
Which slope through darkness up to God—
I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope.”

And somehow or other we have come to regard this doubt, or this faltering faith, as being rather virtuous than otherwise. Would it not be better, more healthful and more salutary, did we insist that there is no room for such faltering or such doubt, when men have the record of Christ’s life in their hands, and may learn, not only what is

said of Him, but what He said also? That with such a record before them unbelief is altogether inexcusable, and can only betoken a perverted intellect or a wrong state of heart? Be as charitable as you will, your charity should never be allowed to set aside the Saviour's utterances as to the guilt and danger of unbelief; nor should it lead you to assume that men in possession of revelation, however well they may use it, are left in the same state of uncertainty as if no revelation had been given. Our Saviour's words should suffice to convince us that if men will receive and retain His teaching, and the testimony which the Scriptures bear concerning Him, they will know that the qualities He displayed were Divine, and that on a Divine mission of mercy He came into our world.

The lesson from all this is, that we should "search the Scriptures" if we would have our doubts removed and our faith established. There is no argument for God's Word equal to itself. External evidences, however useful, are far inferior to the internal, less instructive and less satisfying. God's Word shines with a splendour which shows plainly whence it has come. The Life which the Gospels record is one which genius could not con-

ceive, nor art portray. It must be real because it surpasses invention. And being real, it must be Divine. It shows neither limited intelligence nor defective character. Every word that Speaker utters is to be implicitly received. Every promise He makes may be confidently relied on. To hint at insincerity, or even at enthusiasm which misleads or exaggerates, is nothing less than profane. He knows what He testifies, and His testimony is true. And when He connects Himself with the Father and the Holy Ghost—when He speaks of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—when He says, “I and My Father are One,” “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,”—we do not wonder that in the book of the Revelation He receives, in common with the Father, the adoration of all the heavenly hosts.

The connection we have noticed is not to be regarded as accidental or even occasional. Rather are we to understand our Lord as indicating the means by which *always* a true knowledge of, and faith in, His character and mission are to be obtained. It is no unusual thing with Him to insist on the conditions which are necessary in order to a knowledge of the Divine. In the discourse which

precedes this prayer (John xiv. 21—24) He speaks of those conditions more fully than in our text. And as the one passage is confirmatory and illustrative of the other, we may glance at some statements in that which have a bearing upon this.

There the man to whom the Father and Son manifest themselves is the man “ who has Christ’s commandments and keeps them.” And by his *having* them we are, of course, to understand, not merely that he has them in possession, for that was true of the whole Jewish nation, “ to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ;” but that he has them in himself, treasured up in his affections and his memory, as things which he prizes and delights in. He is like the happy man of the first Psalm, whose “ delight is in the law of the Lord, and on that law doth he meditate day and night.” Or like the Psalmist himself, when he says of the commandments, “ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb ;” “ Oh, how I love Thy law ; it is my meditation all the day.” Not in the hand only are they held when such language

is used, nor on the parchment scroll; but “written on the fleshy tables of the heart;” loved for their excellence as expressive of the Divine feelings and character; prized for their value as guides of life; held fast as precious possessions with which neither life nor death will induce him to part. By his *keeping* them, again, we are to understand, not their preservation, but their careful observance. Highly prized for themselves, they are carefully reduced to practice in the life. Not approved of theoretically, because of their pure and lofty ethics, as is sometimes done by philosophers, who, instead of complying with God’s requirements, presume to sit in judgment on His ways; not admired for their conciseness, and perspicacity, and other literary qualities, as they might be by critics who have never recognised their moral or Divine authority; not locked up in some cabinet of curiosities, as an antiquarian might preserve some relic of a far distant past,—but brought into daily use as the true rule of life, the man’s aim being in all things to be influenced by the true, and to practise the right.

This being done as the result of love, both Father and Son are said to *manifest* themselves in

consequence to the obedient soul, just as in our text. the disciples' knowledge of Christ's Divine character is connected with their receiving and keeping the Divine words. The manifestation the Saviour intimates is such as cannot be given to the world; because the world lacks the conditions which are necessary thereunto. In answer to the question of Judas, " Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world ?" He said, " He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings ; and the Word which ye hear is not Mine (only), but the Father's who sent Me." This explains why the men of the world cannot receive the Divine manifestation which is granted to the loving and obedient soul. Their not keeping Christ's sayings renders it impossible that they can be admitted to the Divine fellowship which is represented by the Saviour's manifesting Himself to His disciples, and along with the Father making His abode with them. Their disregard for His Word excludes them from this advantage. For how could the Father and the Son dwell with the disobedient ? How make a temple of that heart in which the devil and self are enthroned ? How reveal themselves where men cherish the

morál impurity which is loathsome to the Divine nature? "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the Temple of God with idols?"

The difference made between the world and the disciples, then, in regard to Divine manifestations, was not arbitrary, but in accordance with the principle which it behoves us always to recognise,—*that the perception of the Divine is dependent on the state of the heart.* Just as in nature we must comply with certain conditions to secure certain results, fix the attention in order to acquire knowledge, be temperate and chaste in order to good bodily health, take exercise in order to muscular strength; so in the spiritual sphere we must comply with certain conditions in order to our perception of the Divine. Obedience to the great law of love; a heart pure and submissive; freedom from the bias of corrupt motives, and the tyranny of unruly passion, and the blinding influence of self-sufficiency and pride,—without these the Divine can no more be discerned than colour

can be perceived by the blind or harmony by the deaf. Intellectual strength and agility are of no avail here. A man, by these, may acquaint himself largely with the natural sciences. He may become a distinguished chemist, well acquainted with the laws and properties of matter, how it is to be analysed, and what will result from its various combinations. Or a physiologist, knowing well the faculties and functions of the human frame, the laws which govern and the influences which are adverse or favourable to its health. Or an astronomer, sweeping with penetrating glance over the fields of space, mapping out the distant heavens, and telling you with marvellous certainty what worlds are scattered, and what revolutions are taking place, there. Or a geologist, thoroughly conversant with the long buried strata which contain the history of bygone millenniums. But though by intellectual strength and activity he can become learned in these sciences, he cannot by such means become skilled in spiritual lore. There have been men of eminence in all these departments of study, who, in all pertaining to the Divine, were as ignorant as babes. Chemists who, in all their analyses of matter, could discover no trace

of a God. Geologists who, in the rocky history of successive creations, see neither the finger nor the footprint of the Creator. Astronomers who can discern no token of His power in the balance and motion of the revolving world. Physiologists who find no indication of His wisdom in the wonderfully adjusted parts of the human frame. So they tell us, and yet our faith is not shaken. Their failure does not surprise us. For, with all their intellectual gifts, they have no spiritual discernment; and to minds where that is lacking, God is for ever invisible. Not intellectual strength, or grasp, or penetration; but obedience, self-surrender, humility, uprightness, purity, love, are the qualities to which He reveals Himself. It is no uncommon thing that men of intellect should fail to perceive things which are only discernible by other faculties. If a man of great mind have not an eye to perceive colours, his mental power will not help him to the perception; if he have no ear for melody, his intellect will not enable him to appreciate its strains. And so the best natural faculties will not enable him to understand the higher truths of religion, because it is not by such faculties these truths are discerned. “The natural

man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of earth and heaven, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

I remember looking on a small Highland lake, as it lay peacefully slumbering in the early morning light. Its waters were clear and tranquil; and, on looking on it, I saw the peaks of the surrounding mountains, their verdant tree-clad slopes, the cattle grazing on them, the husbandman at his work, every object in the landscape, as distinctly as when the eye wandered from the lake and looked on the objects themselves. No mirror could more perfectly reflect the human countenance than did that lakelet the features of the surrounding hills and the overarching sky. A short time afterwards I looked on it again, and the fair vision was gone. The mountains and trees and verdant slopes of course stood there still. But there was no image

of them in the lake. How was this? A breeze had sprung up in the interval, and now agitated the surface of its waters. The result would have been the same, had the scum or duckweed gathered over it such as we sometimes see on pools by the wayside. Now just so is it with the human soul. It is only when pure and tranquil, because loving, that God reveals Himself to it. *Then*, it is capable of reflecting His image, so that the altitude and beauty of His perfections may be clearly seen, in so far as they are at all discernible by mortal vision. Let the scum of selfishness gather over it, or the breath of passion disturb it, and the vision is gone. The image of the pure and loving One cannot be reflected in a soul defiled and agitated by selfish and unruly passions and desires. You know what effect is produced by a twist or flaw in a mirror, how it distorts and renders hideous the most beautiful countenance, and how it so alters your own appearance that you dare not look on its reflection of yourself. And in this respect the soul is like a mirror. If it be twisted by selfishness and enmity and rebellion, the image it reflects will be distorted in consequence. Its own state will influence its conception of God.

The aspect which His character assumes to it will be determined by its own feelings. And the less it resembles Him therefore, the less loving and obedient it is, the more unable is it to see God as He is.

But when love, tranquil and obedient love, takes possession of the soul, then God appears to it clearly in all the glory of His perfections. “O how quickly, then, are the veils torn away that conceal the Saviour’s face, and the shadows which obscure His form dissipated for ever! How little difficulty does he that loves find in understanding, after his own measure, Him who is Love!” “Rooted and grounded in love,” he is “able to comprehend with all saints the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” The Saviour’s promise is fulfilled: “He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself unto him.” “If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” “He that loveth,” says John, “is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.”



“NOT FOR THE WORLD.”

“I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine ; and I am glorified in them.”—*John xvii. 9, 10.*

THESE words are not less gracious and fraught with comfort, when properly understood, than the other parts of the prayer, with all of which they are strictly in harmony. They contain nothing which either limits the love of Christ, or is fitted to discourage the seeking sinner; but are, in fact, a proof of the Saviour’s regard for those whom, at first sight, they appear to place beyond the embrace of His love. Their appearing to do this, as we hope plainly to show, is solely owing to their being taken out of their connection, and to the limiting clause which they contain being understood, not as applying to the petition in connection with which it stands, but to the intercession of Christ

generally,—a view which the context not only does not justify, but to which it is directly opposed.

If the limiting clause—"I pray not for the world"—be understood as having reference to the intercession of Christ as a whole, it is obvious that the passage presents a very frowning aspect towards those whom He designates the world. The millions of men who are included in that word would be placed, by the Saviour's limitation, as much beyond the reach of hope as if they were already in hell; and might as well resign themselves to their fate as hapless creatures whom the Saviour of sinners does not pity, and for whom God has made no provision in the Gospel of His Son.

For the inference is infallible, that if Christ will not pray for men, either on earth or in heaven, they must be for ever excluded from those results of His intercession which issue in the salvation of men. If He does not pray, neither has He died, for them; and without His death on our behalf, our salvation is impossible.

This conclusion, legitimately drawn from the interpretation which has been given to our Saviour's words, is enough to make us look for another interpretation, more in harmony both with the context

and with the general tenor of the Word of God. Such an interpretation is suggested by the twentieth verse, in which the Saviour says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word," etc. This shows that the limitation of our text is not applicable to the intercession of Christ generally, but only to the particular petition which He then presents; and suggests to us that in the petition itself there may be something to account for His offering it only on behalf of those who are already His.

Looking at the petition, we see at once that such is the fact, and that its limitation to the disciples is, in reality, a proof of His love for the world, inasmuch as it seeks that which, though good for His disciples, would prove a curse to the world, by presenting a formidable and, indeed, an effectual hindrance to its salvation.

Among the blessings sought in the petition, *steadfastness* and *union* occupy a prominent place. In verse 11, He prays that the disciples may be *kept*, and that they may be *one*. Now the slightest reflection will make it obvious that neither of these things could, with propriety, be sought for the

world. Stability for the world would mean stability in wrong doing—stability in unbelief and rebellion—steadfastness in rejecting Christ's claims—and continued exposure to God's wrath. To pray that it might be kept as it was would be virtually to pray that it might be for ever damned—that no change might ever take place in its character and condition—that the wrath of God might abide on it continually. Hence the Saviour, who loved the world, and died for the world, and earnestly sought the salvation of the world, had good reason for saying, when the subjects of His prayer were steadfastness and union, "I pray not for the world." To have prayed for it thus would have been a proof of His bitterest enmity,—that He desired and took pleasure in its perdition. Not to pray for it was a proof of His truest love, His earnest desire that it might turn and live.

A prayer for union would have meant very much the same thing. Union is strength. By union bodies of men are enabled better to resist the forces by which they are assailed. And the union of the world would have meant the world's stronger and more effectual opposition to all evangelical and spiritual influences. Its union, therefore, would

have tended to render its destruction more certain ; in its disunion lay its hope. It is by the cracks and crevices in its surface—if we may so speak—that the forces of the Gospel are to gain admission. It is through the cleaving and breaking up of its fallow ground that the good seed is to take root in its soil. Upheavals of society are preparatory to its transformation. It is amidst the shaking of the nations that the desire of all nations comes. It is by the overturning of worldly organisations that the kingdom of righteousness and truth is established. Not its union, therefore, but its disunion—the breaking up of its unrighteous confederacies, the upheaval of its iniquitous customs, the awakening of a spirit of inquiry which leads to the conflict of opinion and the abandonment of ancient beliefs, the setting of “a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,”—is the object for which those who love the world should pray. O Saviour, there was good reason why Thou didst say, “I pray not for the world,”—reason which does not lower but enhance our estimate of Thy love ! It became Thee, who didst weep over Jerusalem—who didst pray for Thy

murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”—who didst shed Thy blood and lay down Thy life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. It was in keeping with Thy boundless and infinite love, with Thy desire for the salvation of the lost, that, when Thy petition was for steadfastness and unity, Thou shouldst say, “I pray not for the world !”

Here, then, is one reason why the Saviour should have limited His prayer—a reason which not only consists with, but proves and illustrates, His love. There may be others which we cannot trace: we do not say there are not. But without prying into those which are beyond our ken, it is enough for us to realise this—enough that we can account for the limitation of His prayer on grounds which neither throw imputation on His character, nor contradict the statements of His Word. We would rather leave any difficulty unsolved, than accept of a solution which would lead us to think meanly of Him, or make His Word contradict itself. And we deem it a matter for thankfulness, that, when we meet with a difficulty like that presented by the text, a solution is found which not only leaves His character unimpugned, but serves to confirm and

enhance our estimate of His love. We thank God that the Saviour's declaration, "I pray not for the world," does not disprove, but manifest and illustrate His love for the world.

But this love will appear still more strikingly manifest as we glance at other parts of this prayer. His intercession does not terminate with the parties with whom it commences, but becomes more expansive as it proceeds; embracing not only, as at first, the small number of His disciples, but all who should afterwards believe on Him through their instrumentality. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." Nor does it stop here. If it did, there would be some reason for saying: "Ah, you see He does not pray for the world after all. He prays for those who are His disciples—for those who may become so,—*i.e.*, for the whole body of the elect,—but not for the world. The poor world is altogether passed by. He has no pity for it. He despairs or refuses to utter one word on its behalf—to ask any blessing for it. He leaves it to its doom, and by His silence proves Himself content that it should perish."

There would be greater reason, we say, for

speaking thus, did the prayer stop with verse 20; though even then it might not be true. But this cannot be said by any one who will carefully read what follows; for, thank God, the prayer does not stop here: it goes on until, not by implication merely, but most specifically, it embraces the world: "That they all may be one; that *the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" It proceeds on an ascending scale. Beginning with those nearest to Him, it rises, step by step, until it over-tops the world. Like the ripples in a lake—which spread at first over a small circle, but gradually expand until they cover the whole of its surface, His prayer, embracing at first the small circle of His disciples, becomes wider and wider in its range, until the world is enclosed within its circumference. The Divine pleader, with His human sympathies, thinks first of His personal friends—the few who had been with Him in His public ministry, and enjoyed His private intercourse—the few feeble ones who were little fitted to battle with the world, and were to be left in that world as lambs among wolves—whose infirmities and waywardness had so often taxed His patience, whom with such tender painstaking He had led on thus

far, and who were now to be left without His personal presence, like sheep without a shepherd ; and, as becomes a true friend, He prays for them, first, that they may be preserved amidst their manifold dangers, and live together like one family, breathing towards each other a love like His,—yea, a love resembling, in human degree, the love which subsisted between the Father and Himself. But His thoughts are not confined to them. He sees the thousands who are to be converted through their instrumentality, and prays that the same love may characterise *them* also—that the self-sacrificing love to which the world was a stranger, and which it needed so much to become acquainted with, not by verbal description, but by living embodiment, in order to its learning itself to cherish it, might distinguish all who should bear His name.

Nor does the vision terminate even here. He sees the effect which this mutual love of His disciples would have on the world at large,—how, perceiving the superiority of this love to its own selfishness, and that, as it far surpassed the attainment of unaided humanity, it must necessarily be Divine in its origin, and, connecting it with Him-

self, regarding it as of His originating and inspiring, the world would be led to believe in His Divine character and mission. He sees all this ; and, not shrinking from the prospect, but rejoicing in it with sublime exultation, recognising it as the fruit and reward of His soul's travail, the great object of His incarnation and death, His heart breathes out its intensified desires and boundless benevolence in the prayer—"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee ; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Oh, it is a prayer worthy of the great heart whence it flows,—the heart that wept over the infatuation and doom of the impenitent ; the heart that prompted Him to pray for His murderers, as they aggravated by their scorn His dying agonies ; the heart that was pierced, that its blood might be poured out as an atonement for the sins of the world ; the heart which has never failed to respond to the appeal of the wretched ; the heart whose pity and patience no provocation could exhaust ; the heart which would break before it would abandon the objects of its affection ! The prayer is worthy of that heart ; there is nothing narrow or exclusive in it. The world has an in-

terest in it—"That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

The prayer manifests the Saviour's love by its discrimination as well as by its comprehensiveness. While we see how boundless that love was from the numbers it embraces, we see how careful and tender it was from the manner in which it specifies the blessings suited to its various objects. As a father, who shows his love to all his family by conferring gifts on them all, makes it still more manifest by the considerate manner in which he confers on each the gift most in accordance with its wishes or its welfare ; so, while the comprehensiveness of the Saviour's prayer manifests His love, that love is still more manifest in the discrimination with which it suits its petitions to the condition of those for whom He prays. When His thoughts and desires are confined to those who are *His already*, He prays for their union and preservation, that they may never become alienated from each other or from Himself. A thing most earnestly to be desired as regarded them—the most appropriate and valuable boon which he could ask for them,—but by no means a thing to be desired on behalf of those whom He designates "the world."

Such a prayer as regarded them would have been no better than an imprecation. The thing which it sought would have proved not a blessing but a curse. And shall we not admire the love which, while offering this petition for His disciples, could stop to guard the world against any injury it might derive from it—taking pains to say, “Not for the world do I desire this: their preservation and union would keep them away from myself, and issue in their final destruction; not for their preservation and union do I pray”? so showing that even in His prayer for His friends He did not overlook or disregard the interests of those who were at enmity with Himself. Again, when His thoughts glance at those who are to be converted through the instrumentality of His disciples, the thing which He seeks is most appropriate. That they may be united together as the members of one family, by their common love to Him, and know the blessedness of that fellowship where each one feels for another as for himself; where they “look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others;” and “by love serve one another”—a fellowship involving the greatest blessings which men on earth may

hope to enjoy ; an earnest and a foreshadowing of the society and enjoyments of heaven,—that they may enjoy this here, and afterwards be admitted to His presence, to behold and share in His glory, this is what He asks when He contemplates the thousands who will believe on Him through the apostles' words. And surely nothing can surpass the generosity of this prayer. No blessing exceeds in value those which it specifies. He desires not that they may be happy apart from Himself, not merely that He may in the exercise of His power be enabled to confer blessing's on them ; but that they may *share in His blessedness and glory*. And, King of kings as He is—Lord of all worlds as He is—possessed of boundless resources, and of all power in heaven and earth, as He is—He cannot do more for them than that. He has nothing better to give. In the boundless universe there is nothing so much to be desired as to witness and to share the glory of Him who made it.

But neither is the world made the subject of *this* petition. And for this very good reason—that the world, as it is, is not prepared for it. The world, as it is, cannot enjoy the fellowship of saints. The

world, as it is, is not fit for the society of the glorified. The world, as it is, could neither share in, nor appreciate, nor discern, the glory of Christ. The world must undergo a mighty transformation before it is fitted for that. It must, by faith in Christ, be made partaker of a new life. It must become possessed of a new character—of new tastes and new discernments—must become the subject of a new creation. And hence, when His prayer ultimately contemplates the world, it asks the blessing most suited to it, just as it asked blessings suitable for the objects whom it previously embraced. The world's faith in Him would work in it the transformations which it required, and fit it for enjoying the blessings of the faithful. Moreover, that faith would bring it within the circle of His disciples, giving it the fitness and the right to enjoy all that He sought on their behalf. Believing first, and thereby being created anew, it would not only be admissible to the fellowship of the saints, but actually introduced into that fellowship—not only qualified for the future glory of the Lord, but by His grace entitled, and ultimately admitted, to its enjoyments. Thus His prayer for the world actually embraces all

that is specified in His prayer for the others; inasmuch as it contemplates its being brought into the same state as the others. It only, with wise and discriminating love, postpones the enjoyment of these blessings, until by its conversion the world has been prepared for them. It does not exclude the world from any blessing, but only seeks that the world may receive blessings when its state will render them such; and seeks first of all, therefore, that its state may be changed. It shows no want of love for the world; but a love as tender as it is boundless. It shows love both in its limitations and its comprehensiveness. All the love which embraces His friends reaches out its hand ultimately to bless the world; because it desires that the world may, through undergoing the necessary preparation, be brought to enjoy all the blessings which He asks on behalf of those who believe in His name, and have consecrated their life to His service.

I might go further, and show that the conversion of the world is, as regards man, the *ultimate* object of His prayer for His disciples. He, no doubt, desired their *preservation* for their own sake; for He loved them not only as creatures, but also both

as His brethren and friends. He, no doubt, desired their *union* for its own sake ; because He takes delight in the happiness which it promotes, and is pleased with the spectacle of brethren dwelling together in unity. He, no doubt, desired their *sanctification* for its own sake ; for all pollution is repugnant, as purity is congenial, to His pure and spotless nature. But you will perceive that He also desires these blessings for His disciples, *because of their bearing on the conversion of the world*. Blessings sought for those who were already His disciples are closely linked together in His mind with the conversion of those who should afterwards believe on Him through their word. And more obviously the union of these future converts is linked with, and viewed, and sought, as the means of promoting the world's conversion, "That they all may be one, . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." So far, then, the conversion of the world, though not the only, is the *ultimate*, object of His prayer. Other blessings are sought, not simply because of what they are in themselves, but because of their fitness to promote this. His large benevolence desires nothing less than the conversion of the

world. And His prescient mind, looking down the vista of the future, sees the glorious and grateful spectacle which the world has not witnessed yet—but shall witness, we trust and believe, before the end of time—of a united Church—one in faith and one in heart—promoting by the united force of its efforts and the beauty of its character the conversion of the world; and in desiring the world's conversion, even as He came to save it, and offered Himself as a propitiation for its sins, He seeks the union of the Church for its sake—the grateful spectacle for the sake of the glorious result, “That they all may be one, . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” O, blessed Redeemer, shall we after such words dare to question Thy love for the world? Shall we dare to charge Thee with refusing to pray for the world? The world, whose conversion Thou didst so earnestly seek—the world, whose welfare was so dear to Thy heart—the world, for whose guilt Thou hast atoned—the world, for whose ransom Thy blood was shed? Do not Thy wounds plead for it? Does not Thy blood speak on its behalf? Are not the memorials of Thy death a perpetual intercession for the world which crucified Thee? Does not

Thine incarnation and Thy poverty, Thine agony and bloody sweat, Thy cross and passion, Thy death and burial, Thy resurrection and exaltation, enforce the prayer which Thy lips uttered—“That the world may believe that Thou didst send me”?



THE SAVIOUR PLEADING WITH THE FATHER ON BEHALF OF HIS OWN.

" And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name : those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to Thee ; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves."—JOHN xvii. 11—13.

THE Saviour here prays, as we stated in our last chapter, for the conservation and union of His disciples ; and the three verses before us contain three reasons for His offering the prayer, with some other discourse suggested by or explanatory of the reasons given. We shall dwell on these in the order in which they appear, taking notice of all the words which the Saviour uses, so far as they explain or give additional force to His several pleas.

I. *He states how His prayer for them is occa-*

sioned and rendered necessary by His own departure (ver. 11).

Very tenderly, as if He realised most keenly the difficulties of their position, does He speak of His approaching removal, when they would be left without the care which He had always exercised towards them. It almost seems as if He contrasted His own prospect with theirs, and felt how different it would be with Him and them; how their exposure to the world's persecution, without His guidance and guardianship, would place them in a very unenviable position as compared with Himself, when He would be dwelling amidst the security and enjoyments and glories of His Father's house. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. I am no more in the world to protect them; but they are still in it, where they need My protection so much. I come to Thee, where I am beyond the reach of the world's hatred. It can no more persecute or molest Me. I shall have no more to bear the rich man's scorn, or the proud man's contumely, or the malignant slanders of those who are righteous in their own eyes, or the contra-

dition of sinners against Myself, or the malignity of those whose welfare I have sought, and who have 'hated Me without a cause.' But these are in the world, and will have to bear them all. The brunt of its hatred, which I have borne so long, will light on them. Evil tongues which assailed Me will assail them. Violent hands which have maltreated Me will maltreat them. The malignity which pursued Me to the death will pursue the members when the Head is gone. The world will see in them the representatives of Him on whom its enmity was poured, and will direct on them the deluge of its fury with which it overwhelmed Me. All this they will have to suffer for my sake, while I am enjoying the glory which Thou hast given Me; and under their worse suffering they will not have my bodily presence to lean upon and comfort them as they have now." Such, to our thinking, is the tender and persuasive plea which the Saviour urges on behalf of His disciples. We almost fancy Him loath to leave them in the helpless and exposed and defenceless state which His tender solicitude so vividly pictures. It seems as if He would like to linger with them rather than leave them

so forlorn—as if His human sympathy made it difficult for Him to tear Himself away—as if the glory which awaits Him would not be welcome if they are to be left as lambs among wolves. Nor will He leave them until He has poured out His heart's desire to His Father on their behalf, and secured for them that Omnipotent, though invisible, guardianship which compensates for His absence. To this, as we have said, His prayer is directed, and this it cannot fail to secure; for the Divine Father will not deny the request of such a pleader, supported by such a tender and persuasive plea. They need not fear the want of all-sufficient guardianship, of whom He says, with so much tender and clinging affection, “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me.”

The Saviour utters no meaningless words. And when, after the plea He has just urged, He says, “*Holy Father*,” He imparts to it an additional force by appealing to the purity and rectitude of the Divine nature. It is something like Abraham’s appeal when he is pleading for Sodom: “Shall

not the Judge of all the earth do right?" " *Holy Father*, canst Thou leave these forsaken ones unprotected? Wilt Thou act contrary to the holiness of Thy character by withholding from them all compensating advantages for their loss of my bodily presence? *Holy Father*, Thou wilt treat them in a manner worthy of Thy holiness. It will not be shown that Thou hast no pity for those who are so helpless and exposed; that Thou dost grant no compensation to those who suffer such loss. If Thou dost glorify Thy Son, Thou wilt preserve those whom Thou hast given to Thy Son, and whom He now leaves behind in the midst of their enemies. They are Thine as well as Mine. Thine first, and then Mine; Mine now, but Thine still. All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine. *Holy Father*, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me."

II. *He pleads the fact that He Himself has kept them safe while He was with them* (ver. 12). "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name; those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost."

"In Thy name" here is the same as "by Thy name" in the previous verse; so that in that He

has only prayed that the Father may keep them by the same means as He had employed for the same end. His words here testify to His having imparted to them the clear knowledge of God, in the first instance, and refreshed them with, and instructed them in, that knowledge as their needs arose. With such a Guide and Instructor ever near them, the temptations which assailed could have little power over them. Even the hostile spirit and persecuting conduct of the world were insufficient to drive them from their faith in and attachment to Himself, when He was ever at hand to reveal to them the Father's character and purpose, and hereby to assure them of the great things God had in store for them. Often enough they would have been sadly perplexed and greatly shaken, filled with dismay, and oppressed with gloomy forebodings, in danger of renouncing their discipleship, when they saw that, as regarded this world, it meant the loss of all things, had He not been there to encourage them with His gracious words. But from His lips and His life also they received those revelations of the Father which had proved the source of their inward strength. Directed by Him from earthly things to the higher

sphere of the Divine purposes—taught to look from man to God, to set over against the human hostility the Divine favour, and over against their earthly privations and trials the provision which was being made for them in heaven—they could bear with equanimity and fortitude all that they might have to suffer for His sake, and so remained steadfast in their adherence to Him in spite of all the temptations to apostasy by which they were assailed.

Thus they were kept. The Saviour, on leaving them, could render to the Father a good account of all that had been given to Him. “While I was with them, I kept them—those whom Thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost.” Not one. With all their peculiarities and frailties, He had so watched over them and dealt with them as to preserve them all. Thomas, with his unbelieving, questioning, sceptical turn of mind; John and James, with all their energy and ambition, sons of thunder, who sought to sit one on the right and the other on the left in His kingdom; poor blundering Peter, with his hasty impulses and weak resolutions and ignorance of himself, and tendency to rush recklessly into positions where his strength failed

him, his courage when under excitement, and his cowardice when the excitement failed, his brave purposes and sad failures, and bitter repentance and overflowing gratitude when his faults were graciously forgiven,—they had all been kept. The Saviour, on leaving the world, could deliver them up to His Father's care as a charge to which He had been faithful, over which He had watched with a tender and effectual solicitude, saying, “Here am I and the children whom Thou hast given Me.” “Those whom Thou hast given Me I have kept, and none of them is lost.”

Humanly speaking, that keeping was no easy task. It required great patience and self-sacrifice on the part of the Good Shepherd to prevent such wayward sheep from going finally astray. It required a wisdom like His own to keep men of such different temperaments and dispositions living in harmony, and to preserve them from unseemly jealousies and strifes. It required His infinite forbearance to deal gently with their childish blunders, and to lead them gradually to the clear preception of the truth. It required One who could put Himself by sympathy in their places, and vividly realise their feelings, to minister to them the due ad-

mixture of rebuke and encouragement, of gentle chiding and kindly help. It required one who was human as well as divine,—human to approach them closely, Divine to succour them,—in order to awaken in them those feelings of love and reverence, of personal attachment and wondering awe, which bound them to Him by ties which persecutions could not sever. And when He had done all that was required, and had preserved them so that none of them was lost, there was fitness in His using the fact as a plea for His Father keeping them in like manner, and in equal security, now that He was about to be removed. The Father will not leave unprotected those over whom the Son has so tenderly and effectually watched. The Father will not suffer to be lost those whom the Son has preserved. Entrusted to Him by the Father, and kept with so much tenderness and fidelity, they will not, now that He commits them to the Father's care again, be left by Him to perish. The Father will not thus relinquish the purpose concerning them indicated by His previous treatment; nor will He, by leaving them to themselves, show Himself regardless of all His Son's care. He has sympathy with His

Son's feeling, and will value those whom He has so faithfully and carefully preserved. If the Son has prized them and kept them, the Father will prize and keep them likewise, not only for their own, but also for His Son's sake. It is something like an appeal to the Father's love to Himself. "I have kept them, and none of them is lost. Thou gavest them Me, and I have prized and guarded the gift; for the sake of Thy love to Me, continue Thou to guard it after I am gone." Such, so far as we can see, is the force of this plea. And it is a plea, we may be sure, which cannot fail. The Father's love to the Son cannot be appealed to by that Son in vain.

The Saviour makes one exception; but it is an exception which does not invalidate or modify His declaration that He had kept them, because this one was not intended to be kept. He was admitted into the circle of the disciples—into the inner circle of the twelve—for a purpose connected with the Saviour's work; and left in that circle to pursue His own course to ruin, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." It was foretold and ordained that one of His own should betray Him; and Judas, whose character fitted him for it, had

been chosen to this work. The little faith which was in him when he joined the twelve was not strong enough to resist his natural covetousness ; and that faith was soon eaten out by it, when, stimulated by his relation to Christ, and the opportunity of dishonestly enriching himself, through being—because of his financing abilities and economical tendencies possibly—entrusted with the bag. Previous to this his covetousness had led to theft. The Saviour Himself had said of him, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil ?” And now he is called “the son of perdition,”—a man of whose character and course perdition is the natural result. It was not intended that this man should be kept, but that in his connection with Christ he should be left to work out his own ruin, and at the same time fulfil the Scriptures and the Divine purpose relating to the Saviour’s death. Those Scriptures, however, and that Divine purpose, it may be noticed, did not make Judas what he was. God’s use of men’s wickedness for the fulfilment of His own purposes does not make Him responsible for that wickedness, or diminish their guilt. Peter told the Jews how, according to the determinate counsel

and foreknowledge of God, they had crucified the Redeemer; but he also told them that they had done so "with wicked hands." The fact of their doing it in accordance with the Divine purpose did not in any degree mitigate the criminality of their procedure. Nor did the Scriptures which foretold the conduct of the traitor, or the Divine purpose that such a man should "be among the necessary surroundings of the Redeemer," render him one whit less guilty in what he did. It is true the Saviour is said to have chosen him. But He did not choose him to make him bad; but, because he was bad, selected him as the suitable instrument for doing that which was to be done. The traitor did but pursue his own course, and act in accordance with the natural out-workings of his own character. The betrayal was the natural result of the covetousness. And it neither adds to nor diminishes his guilt, that God, in His overruling providence, employed his wickedness as an instrument for the fulfilment of His own designs. He was not made "the son of perdition," in order that he might betray the Lord of Glory; but, being "the son of perdition," he was admitted to the circle of the twelve, in

order that the Scriptures foretelling the betrayal should be fulfilled.

III. *The Saviour gives as a reason for His prayer His desire that His disciples might be partakers of His joy* (ver. 13). “And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” These words, however, seem to give a reason why He offers His prayer in their hearing, as well as, or, rather than, a reason for His prayer being answered. This too, no doubt, if not directly, by implication at least; for they could derive no joy from the offering of a prayer for them which was not to be answered.

He means them to be made glad—to have His joy fulfilled in themselves—by the knowledge that He thus prayed for them. And truly it was enough to gladden them, to fill them with joy—with the same joy which they had obtained from their intercourse with Him—the joy which, dwelling in Him, He had communicated to them, that in their hearing He breathed such petitions in their behalf. What so fitted to yield them joy,—not the joy of the world, but Christ’s own joy,—as the assurance thus obtained that His love for

them was not abated, but became, if possible, more tender and clinging and strong, in prospect of His removal; and that wherever He might go, therefore, His affection would not be withdrawn from them; but that He would continue to cherish for them the same tender and considerate and sympathetic attachment which He had shown while here? It was a sad thought that He was to be parted from them as regarded His bodily presence; but it was a source of consolation to them that they would not lose His love. Their eyes might not see the Master's form, but they would have a place in His heart, and His eye would still look after and watch over them. In this way, though bodily absent, He would be with them by His Spirit always. Their ears might not hear the Master's voice; but the Master would lend a listening and sympathetic ear to theirs, and continue to lift up His own voice on their behalf. They would not want a friend in the court of heaven if this powerful pleader was there. He would doubtless continue there the intercession which here He had begun; and would not cease, until He had welcomed them there, to urge His request, "Father, I will that they also whom

Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me ; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." If such was the effect which hearing Him utter this prayer would have on their mind—and that it would have such effect there seems no reason to doubt—if it would give them such an impression of the Saviour's continued interest in them, we can see how, by speaking such things in their hearing, He would further His purpose that His joy might be fulfilled in them.

Nor would they fail to derive joy from the knowledge that He so tenderly and powerfully commended them to the Father's care. They knew, for they had often seen, how effectual His prayers were. They knew, for they had heard Him testify, that the Father heard Him always, and that no request of His, therefore, could be uttered in vain. And what joy must it have been, therefore, for them to hear Him engaging Omnipotence to protect them, Omniscience to watch over and guide them, and infinite Benevolence to bless them, and enlisting all Divine attributes in their favour! They had heard Him say just before, " Peace I

leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." They had heard Him say, "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And lo! here is the peace which He bequeathed to them, and the joy. His blessed legacy comes to them already in the confidence in the Father's care over them which they derive from His prayer. That prayer, methinks, from the faith in the Father's interest in their welfare which their hearing of it inspires, did more than even the words which He addressed to them, to secure His design that His joy might be fulfilled in them.

And shall we, dear brethren, allow these words to be joy-inspiring only to the disciples who heard them? Shall they not minister joy to us also, for whose benefit they have been placed on record? This prayer is meant for us as well as for them. Although our circumstances differ somewhat from those which it recognises, its principles we may apply to ourselves. It reveals the feelings which are in His heart—feelings which are essentially the same towards all His chosen. It is a type of His intercession as carried on in heaven. It

shows us what God may be expected to do for us in answer to such a pleader—what reason we have for confiding in the Divine favour thus invoked on our behalf. And, oh! did we but realise the power and the prevalence of His intercession—what blessings it brings within our reach—what a guarantee it is for our preservation amidst all the hostile powers and influences with which we are surrounded—how it procures us pardon for our offences, and sustaining and preserving grace—how it contemplates and secures our final admission to the Father's house, and our eternal and ecstatic vision of the glories which are there,—more would not be wanting in order that even in us here and now the Saviour's benevolent purpose should be realised—“ That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”



THE UNWORLDLINESS OF CHRISTIANS.

“I have given them Thy word ; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”—*John xvii. 14.*

THE Saviour in these words adds to the pleas which He urges on His people’s behalf. They offer an additional reason to those already noticed for His prayer being answered. Their character, because of His word dwelling in them, differs from that of the world, and exposes them to its hatred. Hence the necessity that Divine power should be exercised in preserving them from the temptations and persecutions to which they would be exposed. And inasmuch as in this they are like their Master, we can see fitness in the plea that the Father who loves Him should graciously guard and keep them. “They bear My image—Thy word which I have given them has

wrought in them this transformation—the world hates them in consequence ; Thou who lovest Me, preserve them from all the evils to which they are exposed.”

I. *The unworldliness which our Lord here attributes to His disciples is the same as He manifested Himself.*

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” The difference between them and it is, in nature if not in degree, the same as the difference between Him and it. As He was distinguished from it or separated from it, so—after their own measure—are they.

We have here a guide then—a sure guide—to the sense in which Christians “are not of the world ;” availing ourselves of which, we shall see that their severance from the world goes much deeper than any outward observance, and does not consist in the studious avoidance of all the customs which the men of the world observe. The Saviour’s life was by no means distinguished for its singularity in this respect. He was no anchorite who kept himself aloof from the ordinary haunts, or frowned on the ordinary pursuits, of men. He had not, like His forerunner, His dwell-

ing in the wilderness ; nor was He remarkable like him either for the coarseness of his dress or the homeliness of his fare. As no mention is made of His attire, it may be assumed that, unlike the Baptist's, it was that ordinarily worn by men in the station of life which He assumed. And His fare seems to have been equally free from peculiarity ; for no mention is made in His case of the locusts and wild honey on which John subsisted, but, in contrast with the abstemiousness of the latter, who came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, it is expressly stated that the Son of Man came eating and drinking. Festive occasions, we know, He did not shun ; for the marriage at Cana was sanctified by His presence, and some of the good cheer was provided by His miraculous power. He showed plainly that a custom is not necessarily wrong because observed by the men of the world ; and that many which exist may in themselves be neither the offspring nor the embodiment of the worldly spirit, but harmless in their nature, and good or bad in their influence, entirely according to the spirit in which they are observed. The holiest may conform to them without blame in themselves or harm to others, neither lowering

their own spiritual tone, nor exerting on others an injurious influence ; while the avoidance of them may be prompted by a spirit which savours more of the world than of Christ.

Neither does the unworldliness of Christians consist in treating as evil the earth and the things which it contains. No one who reads the Gospels can imagine that our Lord evinced any abhorrence of, or contempt for, the bounties of nature or the beauties of earth and sky. He was no despiser of natural beauty who dwelt on it so much in His discourses, and had His favourite places of resort among the most lovely scenes which Palestine contained—especially the shores of that lake to whose beauty every visitor bears enthusiastic testimony. With what admiration He speaks of the lily which He there saw growing at His feet, to which Solomon in all his glory was not to be compared ! Even the common grass growing upon the mountains ministers pleasure to His eye, while it speaks of trust in God's providence which, clothing the grass, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will much more surely clothe those who believe in Him. Such were the feelings with which our Saviour regarded nature ; such are

the feelings of those who most resemble Him— who are not of the world as He is not of the world. The best of men in every age have found nothing in nature's beauties at variance with the most robust piety; but much by which it is nourished and fostered. To devout minds Nature's influences are altogether favourable to devotion. Even the bleakest region has in it that which lifts the thoughts to God. The tiny tuft of moss in an African desert, speaks of Him who made it grow, and encourages the hungry drooping traveller to hold on his weary way. In fine, there is no place in all the wide world where men may not find something fitted to foster devotion; and those who deem it necessary to spiritual life, to close their eyes on anything which God has made, do not prove the world's badness, but the corruption of their own hearts; for he who cannot worship under the open sky, can worship nowhere, nor would heaven itself be sacred to him to whom the earth is profane.

The unworldliness of our Lord and His disciples alike consists in freedom from the spirit of the world—the unloving, selfish, and proud spirit which men of the world breathe, and which is

directly opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. It is not of the material world, but of this worldly spirit, that John says, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In similar manner our Lord bears testimony to the antagonism of the worldly spirit to His own, when He pronounces it impossible for any one to serve God and mammon.

And how is this antagonism to be accounted for? How is it that the spirit of Christ, which every true Christian breathes, and the spirit of the world, are so opposed? Is it not owing to the fact, that the worldly spirit is produced by the influence of things seen and temporal, whereas the Christian spirit takes chief cognizance of, and is fostered by, the things which are unseen and eternal? The world concerns itself much about the visible, very little, if at all, about the invisible, pursues the things of time and overlooks the things of eternity, considers what is expedient rather than what is right, and is more desirous of

securing the applause of man than the approval of God. The Christian spirit, on the contrary, prefers the unseen to the seen, the eternal to the temporal, the right to the expedient, the approval of God to the applause of men.

This spirit naturally leads Christians, in all matters of right and wrong, to a very different course from that which the men of the world feel at liberty to pursue. It resolutely avoids all customs, however generally practised, however approved by the leaders of fashion, which are wrong in themselves, at variance with God's law, or hostile to the best interests of the human race. There is a slavish spirit abroad which dares not to be singular. The best reason it offers for much that it consents to do is that everybody does it. Without trying the custom by the standard of God's law, troubling not itself to ask what good is likely to result from it, or if it may not be productive of real harm, it is content to plead the universality of its observance. The Christian spirit condemns such slavish conformity, rightly judging that the prevalence of a custom is *prima facie* evidence rather against it than in its favour, so long as the world remains as it is, and that if

it cannot be shown to be right its popularity does not make it safe. Christian men are governed by a higher rule than fashion ; and if the fashionable can be proved wrong, they dare, though at the expense of being singular and *outré*, to avoid conformity to the world.

Equally is the Christian spirit at variance with a *slavish* adherence to prevailing customs which have no foundation in reason. It will not needlessly violate such as are harmless ; but neither will it so fear the opinion of the world, as to submit to the enslavement which requires their observance under all conditions, and makes the necessity of deviating from them a drawback to the comfort of life, so that men dare neither eat, nor dress, nor act, otherwise than the etiquette of the time prescribes. Even conventional rules, it is admitted, may sometimes serve a good purpose, and should not be rebelled against when kept in their proper place. But when conventionalism becomes tyrannical, and her dictates are respected almost more than the requirements of God's law—when to be out of fashion is deemed worse than to be guilty of some breach of the decalogue—it is the part of Christians to show by their conduct,

that they are not prepared, at the bidding of the world, to forfeit the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. Slavish adherence to customs which are not supported by reason, and have no foundation in the nature of things, is an undue deference to the opinion of a world which is the enemy of Christ. A Christian may observe them so far as they are consistent with convenience and conducive to order; but when he remembers that he serves a Master whom the men of the world do not recognise, he will not suffer them, though innocent in their nature, to become harmful to himself by making himself their slave, and observing them in every minute particular and under all conditions, even when they curtail his power of doing good, as is the habit of worldly men. In this respect he is not of the world as Christ was not of the world. He dares, like his Master, to be singular, when he can thereby better fulfil the great purpose of His life.

But the unworldliness of Christians relates not merely to outward observances. The spirit of which we have spoken affects a man not merely in his outward acts, but gives an unwonted tone and complexion to his entire character. The for-

mation of unworldly habits is of itself of little more consequence than the putting on of a new dress, if the man himself remains the same. Deviation from worldly customs and fashions is of no value, if the man remains unchanged in the spirit and purpose of his life. His outward unworldliness is only commendable when it proceeds from an unworldly state of heart, and is the result and expression of higher and nobler thoughts and emotions than are common to worldly men. The Christian's nonconformity to the world is the consequence of the transformation of character which has been effected by the renewing of the mind or inner man. The *selfishness* which is characteristic of the world, has given place to the kind and all-embracing charity which Christianity inspires. The *self-indulgence* which is the world's bane, is succeeded by the self-denial which sacrifices pleasure and interest for a brother's good. The *self-will*, by reason of which the world is essentially at enmity with God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, is exchanged for the spirit of obedience which asks, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" and on the answer being given, cheerfully obeys, or submissively breathes,

“Thy will be done.” The *pride* by which the world is puffed up, is prostrated into humility, and self-abased under the shadow of the cross. The *impure motives* by which the world is actuated, the *impure affections* which lurk and revel in the world’s heart, have, under the purifying influence of the Divine Spirit, given place to that singleness of purpose which fills the whole body with light, and to that love for God and all that is godlike which is the offspring of the new creation. The *works of the flesh* are abandoned, and the fruits of the Spirit begin to adorn the life. The *heart*, which was naturally as a cage of unclean birds, becomes the shrine and temple of the Holy Ghost, and the man is being “cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” This is essentially the unworldliness of those who are Christ’s; of whom He says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

This will appear more obvious as we proceed to consider,

II. *Whence the unworldliness of Christians springs.*

The Saviour attributes it, as we think, to the

Word which He has given them. "I have given them Thy Word;" that is, the Word concerning Thyself—the Word which Thou hast given Me to reveal—the Word of the truth of the Gospel.

This "Word" is frequently spoken of as the instrument of regeneration. Men are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth." The believing reception of this Word effects a complete revolution in the views and feelings, first in relation to God, and then in relation to all other beings and things. The man finds a new centre, and moves in a new sphere, bases his life on a new principle, regulates it by new rules, and directs it to new ends. His conversation, or citizenship, or mode of life, is brought into harmony with the Gospel of Christ. He is changed, not by a series of directions which he obeys, but by the Word of God—the revelation of Gospel truth, which he has received, going down into the depths of his nature, and producing a change in the springs of his life, not in his habits merely, or his surroundings, but in *himself*. Thus, far more than if it merely enjoined an outward

change, does it issue in his being outwardly changed. He ceases to be like the world in externals as well as internals. He apes not the extravagance of style in which worldly men indulge, in order that, as they do, he may gratify his vanity. He is not absorbed, as they are, in the pursuit of wealth for selfish ends, whether of self-indulgence or self-aggrandisement. He follows not the stream of fashion or custom, when it is either arbitrary or profitless. In the appropriation of his time or means, he considers not only what will yield him pleasure, but what will glorify God and bless mankind. He takes not for granted that because a thing is fashionable, it is therefore right, but tries all by the higher standard of the Divine law. He does all this, because this is the way in which the new life awakened in him by the Divine Word is expressed and fostered. This life further issues in the constant cultivation and increase of all that is in harmony with itself and the Word from which it springs; *the charity* which suffers all things, and seeks not her own, and is not easily provoked; *the humility* which is willing to become the servant of all that it may by any means save some; *the heavenly-mindedness* which

keeps earthly things in their proper place, and uses them for highest ends ; *the integrity* which eschews all dishonesty and deceit ; *the nobility of soul* which cannot stoop to wrong to escape any amount of suffering or secure any amount of gain ; *the purity* which cannot bear the touch, and is sullied even by the shadow, of evil. All these and other qualities are the result of the indwelling word—the Divine Word which has been incorporated into the Christian's spiritual nature, and now influences all his being. And if these and kindred qualities are cultivated and made prominent in the life, their possessor will soon discover, in painful manner, it may be, how unlike he is to the men of the world ; and will realise in his experience the truth and meaning of our Saviour's words—“I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

This leads to our considering very briefly,

III. *The consequence of this unworldliness.*

In the case of our Lord's disciples, according to His own testimony, it was their exposure to the world's hatred. And when we consider how inoffensively up to this time the disciples had lived ;

how they had made no aggressive efforts on the world, nor done anything to rouse its hatred ; His testimony that the world even then had hated them, is perhaps the most conclusive evidence we could have of the essential antagonism of the world to everything which is Christlike—evidence which should excite inquiry as to whether the tolerance which professing Christians receive from the world now, be not owing to their possessing so little of the spirit of the Lord. There is no reason for supposing that what our Lord says of His disciples was exceptional. Rather should we regard His words as involving the general principle, that the world's enmity will be excited whenever it meets with a character which resembles His own.

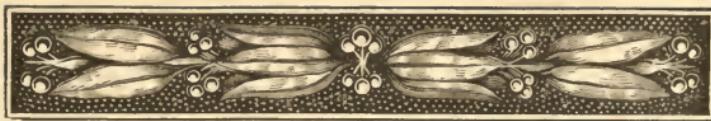
In view of this there is something less gratifying than ominous, in the good terms on which Christians are now able to live with their worldly neighbours, when they are not only tolerated in worldly circles, but can make bosom companions of, and even be united in marriage to, those who, knowing nothing of spiritual life, and being habitually and ostentatiously regardless of unseen realities, are still *of the world*, in the truest and strongest sense of these words. The cause of these amicable relations is

not that the world has changed its character essentially; for that it will never do until it ceases to be the world, by being born of God. And must it not be, therefore, that in the Christians who live with it on such intimate and friendly terms, there is little or nothing of the spirit of Christ? I would utter no sweeping assertion. But there is in this new bearing of the world to the Church enough to awaken the gravest inquiry in all who are really disciples of Christ, and jealous for the honour of their Lord. Nor is it evident that such inquiry, honestly conducted, would not lead to the conclusion, that while Christian principles have somewhat influenced the world, the spirit of the world has far more powerfully influenced the Church; and that we have secured the world's favour by compromising our Christian character in compliance with the world's demands. Good John Bunyan, were he now to visit Vanity Fair, would find it very different from what it was when he conducted his pilgrims through it, and described the cruel treatment they received. He would find its hostility to the pilgrims wonderfully abated, but he would also find the spirit of the pilgrims wonderfully changed; and that the truce between the two

has been procured, not by the concessions of Vanity Fair only, but by the concessions of the pilgrims as well. He would find that while the inhabitants of Vanity Fair have little objection to going to church as the best place for displaying their vanities, many of the pilgrims have become much less like travellers through the town than residents in it; that some of them do a very flourishing trade there, and can scarcely be distinguished from other traders, except from their occasional use of a religious phraseology, not at all from the principles on which their trade is conducted; that they patronise their places of amusement, scarcely avoiding even the most disreputable, and appear there in the attire common to those who frequent them; that they build their villas and mansions there, and enjoy the good things of the place; and altogether seem more likely to spend their days in Vanity Fair, than to induce the inhabitants of Vanity Fair to accompany them in their journey to the celestial city. And though he might find it difficult to say how far the pilgrims ought or ought not to avail themselves of the altered feeling, and take their share of the good things which the place supplies, I fear he would

not think the present an unqualified improvement on the time which he so graphically described.

While it is impossible in such matters for one man to give laws to another, it behoves every Christian to remember that the hatred of the world for Christ will continue more or less to follow those who resemble Christ, and that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."



IN THE WORLD, BUT KEPT FROM ITS EVIL.

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil."—JOHN xvii. 15.

CHRISTIANS are in the world for the accomplishment of a great purpose. Like their Lord, they have a mission, the fulfilment of which requires their presence here. Hence their unworldliness does not imply, as we have seen, their removal from the world by death, nor their separation by monastic seclusion; nor does our Lord's prayer for their preservation involve their immediate removal from the evils that surround them. Such removal, however grateful it might be to them, does not consist with the Divine purpose concerning them. Just as our Saviour's mission required that He should visit the world in order to its fulfilment, so it is necessary to the fulfilment of theirs that they should remain in the world for a

time. Hence He says farther on, "As Thou hast sent me into the world, so send I them into the world." As the "salt of the earth," and "the light of the world," they could only fulfil their mission through contact with it. The salt must penetrate the mass which it is designed to preserve, and the light radiate through the darkness which it is designed to dispel. The mass putrefies when the salt is kept apart from it, and the world remains in darkness when the light is withheld. Bodies of men degenerate when there is no one of superior character and enlightenment to counteract their downward tendencies ; and in the absence of Christians the world would inevitably become one mass of corruption too loathsome to be tolerated, every nation becoming worse than the most degraded portions of heathendom, until the whole race was ripe for destruction, like the Canaanites, and the Sodomites, and the antediluvians, whom the justice of God swept from the face of the earth. The presence of Christians in the world is the preventive to such a catastrophe. They conserve what is good in the world, and both by their teaching and their influence counteract its downward tendencies. They are the appointed custodians

and bearers of that message which the Divine Spirit employs to reconcile the world to God. They are living embodiments of the goodness by which the world's ways are reproved, and testimony is borne to the Divine character and claims. By entering into society they may, if faithful as well as conciliatory, modify the principles on which its intercourse is based, and make it conducive to the improvement, instead of the deterioration, of its various members. By conducting their business transactions in a Christian spirit, and in accordance with Christ's laws, they may raise the standard of morality among business men, make their country of good repute among the nations of the earth, and so dispose men to the favourable consideration of the message which God has entrusted to them. Ends these which are not to be despised nor lightly foregone. And as there are no other means of procuring them, but the presence of Christians in the world, there was reason why He who sought the conversion of the world should say, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world."

Even for the sake of Christians themselves, their immediate removal from the world is not desirable.

Pleasant it might be, as we have hinted, to be freed at once from the ills of life, but not necessarily profitable. Our instinctive shrinking from suffering, though arising from the nature of the thing, is no proof of its being injurious to our spiritual interests. If it were so, we may be sure that God would not send it; for He takes no delight in suffering for its own sake, and would not ordain it for His children, were it not for the higher good in which it is fitted to issue. It is obvious to every one how, as the chastisement of a child may correct its faults, and elicit some of the better qualities of its nature, so the suffering with which God visits His people may promote in them some of the noblest traits of character, and thus, instead of harming them, prove a source of positive good. Such qualities as patience, meekness, humility, courageous endurance, thrive best in the school of suffering, and some of them can only be exercised and produced there. Patience has no scope for exercise where there is nothing to bear with. Meekness cannot be displayed where there is no provocation. And for courageous endurance there is neither room nor call where there is nothing to endure. And as these are some of

the loveliest qualities by which Christian character is adorned, and the most precious fruits which human nature, influenced by Divine grace, can bear, it is from the school of affliction that we see come forth some of the fairest types of Christian men and women—those whose quiet self-control, and sweet attractive grace of manner, and gentle disposition, and kind considerateness of others' feelings, commend their religion to others, and make them persuasive and convincing, though it may be silent, witnesses to the power of Divine grace. God seeks to foster in His children such qualities, and the world is the school in which this is done. There is no pain after we have entered the better land. And hence the need that we should be kept here for a time, in order that pain may fulfil its mission in our experience. And whatever may be the nature of our suffering, and from whatever cause it may spring—whether from our circumstances, or our relations, or the persecution of others, or the state of our own health—there is no reason why it should prove injurious to any of us, but every reason why it should be conducive to our highest good.

The temptations of the world, as well as its suf-

ferings, serve an important end in the development of Christian character, and are necessary for the training of those who are to take high place in the kingdom of God. Although no Christian should rush heedlessly into temptation, nor presumptuously court it, it is a great mistake to imagine that the only way in which we can be kept from sin is our being placed in a position where we cannot possibly be tempted. Such a notion is directly at variance with God's method of dealing with His creatures. Holy as He is, and loving holiness, He has not framed a universe into which temptation cannot enter. Neither before nor since the fall has He sought to preserve man from sin by keeping all temptation out of his path. His own Son was tempted, not to show us how to escape temptation, but how to conduct ourselves when exposed to it. There seems to be something more valuable in the Divine estimation than virtue which exists because it has never been tested, or the allegiance of creatures who have had neither inducement to rebel, nor opportunity of going astray. The men who have been most distinguished for the honour He has conferred on them, have not been those who were never tried, and who con-

tinued good, therefore, without effort or struggle on their part; but men, rather, who, powerfully assailed by temptation, have, notwithstanding, maintained their integrity, battling down every tendency of their nature which might have led them astray, and triumphing over the hostile forces which pressed on them from without, coming forth from the conflict all the more strengthened, and purified, and ennobled, because the battle with evil has been so fierce, and the resolution to resist required to be so firm, that their strength has been taxed to its very utmost limit. These are the men, to our thinking, by whom God is most honoured, as well as the men whom He honours most. And for the production of such men, abiding in the world and resisting its temptations is as necessary as growing in the open and resisting the storm is necessary to the development of the oak. And as this is God's method of producing men, so does He make provision that by their continuance in the world they shall be so produced. Although powerfully tempted in order to the cultivation of higher excellence, there is no necessity that any Christian should sin. The temptation is not intended to make him sin, but to evoke his

resistance, so that he may become a stronger and better man. And should it be said that the temptation may be disproportioned to the strength of the tempted—the power of resistance inferior to the force which draws the soul in the direction of evil, so that the man cannot stand if he would ;—there is sufficient guarantee against this in the promise, “ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way for your escape.” He who avails himself of this promise, though still in the world, and occupying the most exposed position there in which a man by God’s Providence can be placed, will find that, though tempted, there is no necessity that he should sin, but may only become, in consequence of the temptation, a better man, and be enabled to perceive the meaning and the mercy of our Saviour’s petition : “ I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

Christians may be in the world, and may act their part rightly towards the world, while they keep it in its proper place, using it without making the acquisition of its honours and possessions the object of life.

That the latter course is pursued to so large an extent by men whose natures fit them for something unspeakably higher and better, is a sore evil, which our Lord could not possibly regard with indifference. It is not necessary to maintain that worldly things are of no value. Good in themselves, they are capable of being used for good purposes, and may lawfully, because of the good ends they are capable of serving, be made objects of ambition to Christian men. That man is to be praised rather than censured, who seeks to reach a position of respectability and influence for the sake of the good it may enable him to accomplish —who allows no opportunity of acquiring it to escape, and jealously guards it when acquired, if he can do so consistently with his duty to God; and who withal employs it for advancing the cause of truth and righteousness. Nor is he to be condemned who desires property for a similar purpose, and having acquired, uses it for man's good and God's glory. But though good in themselves and capable of being used for good purposes, they are sadly misused when, being made ends instead of means to something better, all desire is centred on them, and life is sacrificed in their pursuit. How-

ever successful in its object, a life so spent is simply a life wasted ; powers that were capable of important achievements are recklessly thrown away. Not for this has God endowed us with our intellectual powers ; nor were the warm affections of the human heart ever intended to embrace such comparatively worthless baubles. The energies we possess were meant for nobler work than the pursuit of anything which the world supplies, and can only find employment worthy of themselves in endeavours to do God service and communicate blessing to mankind.

But, happily, it is not necessary that, because Christians are in the world, they should join in the over-eager pursuit of worldly good. There have been, before now, men who mingled with their fellows in all the ordinary occupations of life, and performed in the most efficient manner their duty as citizens of the state, who have been able to keep worldly things in their proper place, and either to use them wisely, or cheerfully to part with them for higher ends. There have been men who were content to forego every worldly advantage at the bidding of conscience, and for the furtherance of some good purpose ; men of honoured name

now, who were content to be disreputable as well as poor in their day; men whom respectability shunned, and calumny blackened, because they dared to tell the world of its sins, that they might thereby promote its reformation. And did not those very men for whom the Saviour here prays remain in a world where they were everywhere spoken against,—treated as the offscouring of all things, chased like vagabonds from city to city, lodged in prison and cast into the fire,—proving themselves, nevertheless, its greatest benefactors, and rising, in consequence, to a place in the foremost ranks of the redeemed in heaven? And what has been done by some may be done by others. The power of God is as able to keep us as it was able to keep them from the evil. And if we will only avail ourselves of His all-sufficient grace, we shall find it as possible as it was to the saints of earlier times, to be in the world without making the world our portion.

Equally possible is it to engage in the business of the world without any sacrifice of integrity. The possibility of this is frequently questioned. The want of fidelity in business transactions is said to be so common that Christian men are under

the necessity of showing an equal laxity of principle with their neighbours. The Saviour's golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so to them," though very proper in other things, is thought to be quite inapplicable to business transactions. If this were true, one would feel obliged to agree with those who think it necessary to their own safety to sever themselves as far as possible from all connection with the world. For we cannot conceive of men being safe in any position where they are *bound* to violate Christianity's fundamental law. That law is not a thing of time, or place, or circumstance; but a thing eternally binding on every creature of God. It will not bend to the exigencies of business. No circumstances can modify its demands. Through all time and through all eternity it must be a ruinous thing, that one should do to another what he would not that another should do to him. And if to be in the world, and engaged in its business, involves any such necessity, the sooner we get out of the world the better.

But is it so? Has the alleged necessity ever been shown to exist? Many things which are merely assumed, have as much place and influence

in this world as those which have been clearly proved. Is not this one of them? We cannot imagine that those who use this plea are prepared to abide by its consequences. Are they prepared to impugn the character of the men whose success in business has been understood to be as honourable as it was extensive? Would they question the integrity of those who have risen out of the penury and obscurity of their youth into the position of merchant princes, whose word for any amount has been as good as their bond all the world over? Such cases are surely numerous enough and significant enough to show that a man does not necessarily starve if he has courage to conduct his business on principles of the strictest and highest integrity. Honesty does sometimes prove the best policy even now, and God makes provision for those whose ways please Him; so that the old saying of the Psalmist is not exactly out of date: "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." But even if the consequences of a rigid adherence to Christian principle in matters of trade should be starvation, it does not follow that Christians should either violate

their principles or leave the world. God sometimes calls His people to martyrdom as well as to ease and comfort. And the martyrdom to which He calls us may come in this shape as well as in any other. It may be that a few business martyrdoms, because of the maintenance of integrity, would prove the best testimony to the power, and the best help to the triumph, of Christian principle. If so, Christian men are not to shun the martyrdom because it comes in such form. The grace which sustained others at the stake and on the scaffold, is able to sustain them also under the slower, but scarcely less painful, martyrdom which they are called to endure. And if the result of their fidelity should be their earlier departure from the world, they will still have the satisfaction of knowing that they left it in God's time and way, instead of in a cowardly manner, skulking out of it in their own.

The foregoing remarks, though disconnected and fragmentary, may throw some light on this petition of our Lord. We do not profess to give all the reasons for it; but enough has been said to show that it was not offered without reason, and that, like all the other parts of His prayer, it consists with the tender love with which He always re-

garded His own. Not only is their removal unnecessary to their piety ; it might prove a drawback to its most favourable cultivation and development, and so diminish the value of their future reward. And their best Friend, in praying for them, will not, even with a view to their present ease and comfort, ask for anything which must issue in such a result. As a wise parent will not, for the sake of giving a child present pleasure, remove him hastily from school, and so lessen his future capability and usefulness ; but will keep him there, though in opposition to both the child's inclination and his own ; so does our Lord, who is at once more wise and more kind than any earthly parent, decline, even for the sake of their present comfort, to take His people from a world in which they are sorely tried, but keeps them in it in order that they may thereby be developed into nobler types of men, rendered capable of higher services, and entitled to a greater reward. It were a great loss to themselves, as well as a drawback to the honour of their Lord, that they should not be made, even by painful trial, all that they are capable of becoming. And herein is good reason for His prayer that they should not by immediate removal be exempt from all the trials which assail them here.



THE MISSION AND CONSECRATION OF THE DISCIPLES.

“ Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”—JOHN xvii. 17—19.

THE Saviour in these words draws two parallels between Himself and His disciples : the first existing, and the other sought. The Father had sent Him on a mission into the world : so He sent them on a mission into the world. This is the existing parallel. He consecrated Himself to His mission, and desired them to be consecrated to their mission also. This is the parallel sought. It was in order to their consecration, the text further states, that He consecrated Himself. Not for that alone indeed ; for such an interpretation

would be a groundless limitation of His words. But looking to the work to which they were called, and viewing that mission as a means of its accomplishment—the work for which He Himself had come into the world—He consecrated Himself that they might consecrate themselves ; and in order that, through their consecration, and whatever other means were necessary thereunto, the great work for which He had come might be accomplished.

A glance at His mission will be the best help to our understanding theirs. His coming into the world was for the accomplishment of a purpose voluntarily undertaken by Himself, but entrusted to Him by the Father, so that He came into the world by the Father's appointment, and to fulfil the Father's will. We cannot speak of His birth as being merely an event which took place in the ordinary course of nature, after the manner in which other human beings descend from their parents by natural generation. It was altogether an extraordinary event, both because of the importance attached to it, and the manner in which it was brought to pass. It was planned in the Divine counsels, decreed by special Divine ordi-

nation, brought about by special Divine action, as God's great provision for the recovery of His rebellious creatures, through which not only would the course of the world's history be changed, but the Divine Being glorified by the manifestation of His perfection in the salvation of myriads of the human race.

The Father sent Him. He was here solely as the Father's agent, speaking in the Father's name, representing the Father's character, acting in the Father's stead, and doing the Father's work, fulfilling the great purpose for which He had left the Father's bosom, where He had dwelt from eternity, enjoying an equality of power and glory. Thus He is always speaking of Himself as sent by the Father. The consciousness of His mission never leaves Him. It gleams out in His very first recorded utterance, when He was yet but a child of twelve years old: "How is it that ye sought Me?" He said to His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Thus, even before Mary understood fully the nature and destiny of the child to which she had given birth, the consciousness of what He was, and of the purpose for which He had come, rises in His

human soul. And, again, in His entrance on His public ministry, the first word He speaks, or at least the very first which the Holy Ghost, through the Evangelists, has recorded for our instruction, reveals the same sense of purpose and of obligation: “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it *becometh* us to fulfil all righteousness.” Thus He whom we might have supposed was above all others free to follow His own inclination, and to please Himself without regard to any other will, rebukes our self-will by recognising, at the very commencement of His course, the supreme law of right which He had come to fulfil, cheerfully obeying as a son when He had the right to command, in order to His accomplishing the mission for which He was sent into the world. Throughout the whole of His earthly life this mission is ever present to His mind. He had just passed through the temptation, when “He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee,” and attending, “as His custom was,” the synagogue of Nazareth, “where He had been brought up,” He read and applied to Himself those words of the prophet: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the

poor ; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." In the same way he never ceases to speak of Himself as sent into the world—sent by the Father—as having come, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him. And even on the very eve of His crucifixion, when shrinking nature instinctively recoiled from the suffering He was to undergo, that which reconciled Him to the prospect was the remembrance that for this purpose He had come. " Now is My soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ; but for this cause came I unto this hour." Before Pilate He would not vindicate Himself as He might have done, and so escape the crucifixion, because then, as always, the purpose of His coming was present to His mind. " To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."

His sanctification consisted in the singleness of purpose with which he consecrated Himself to the fulfilment of His mission. This is seen in the

looseness with which he holds himself to the world, and His departure from it as soon as His work is done. Although it is His Father's world, and he appreciates its beauty, and lovingly notes how replete it is with the proofs of His Father's care, admiring the lily, the grass of the field, finding matter for profitable discourse in the raven's food and the sparrow's flight and fall; He always bears Himself as one who is not at home here, but has come to sojourn for a little while, and then to return whence He came. He speaks of where He has come from and whither He is going. He has no plans in life beyond the accomplishment of His great work. He makes no attempt to secure for Himself any portion of this world's good. He acquires no property, no store of wealth, nor foot-breadth of land. During His public ministry He is always without a home, and not seldom without a meal. Although no ascetic, but capable of enjoying the innocent pleasures, and willing to join in, as well as minister to, the festive mirth of others, He takes no thought of, and makes no provision for, His own future comfort. This world is the scene of work for Him, not a scene in which to settle down and enjoy Himself. And as soon as

His work is done He is ready to retire. When He can say, "It is finished," He bows His head and dies. A few more appearances to His disciples, to fit them for carrying forward the mission which is now entrusted to them, and He finally leaves the earth, until the period of His second advent, "ascending to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God."

Such was His mission, and the spirit in which it was fulfilled. And as He draws a parallel between them, we may learn from His what ours is, and with what consecration it should be pursued. Like Him, we are missionaries. Our relation to Him is like His to the Father. As the Father sent Him, *He sends us*. We are not here, any more than he was, for the fulfilment of our own purposes or the gratification of our own desires, or for the accomplishment of any object which has reference to ourselves alone. We are here solely as His agents, —here to speak in His name, to represent His character, to act in His stead, to do His work, and to fulfil the great purpose for which He came into the world Himself, and keeps us here. And just as He ever spoke of Himself as being sent by the Father, so should we regard ourselves, and speak

of ourselves, as sent here by Him. As the Father's work pressed on Him continually, so should the work which He has given us to do press continually upon us. If He ever felt that He must be about His Father's business, so should we ever feel that we must be about His. As He always acted in the Father's name, not as one who might please Himself by consulting His own interest, or ease, or comfort, but as one who had a mission to fulfil, and might not halt or turn aside until that mission had been accomplished; so should it be borne upon us that we are always to act in His name, and that our own wishes are not to be studied, but our interest, and ease, and comfort freely sacrificed, while we suffer no pause or deviation in our course, until we have finished the work which He has given us to do.

And this acceptance of our mission should not be looked upon as a stern necessity which cannot be avoided, but *rendered in the same voluntary and cheerful manner in which He entered upon His*. As there was but one mind between Him and the Father in reference to His mission, there should be but one mind between us and Him in reference to ours. The Father was not more desirous of

sending Him into our world, than He was desirous of coming ; and the Saviour's desire to send us on a mission should find a fitting response in our desire to accept the mission to which He calls us. In no reluctant spirit, with no tardy steps, did He advance to our rescue when the Father sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world ; and with no reluctant spirit or tardy steps should we advance on the errand on which He sends us. Freely He laid Himself on the altar of sacrifice, in obedience to the Father's will, and for our welfare ; and freely should we lay ourselves on His altar, when we can thereby accomplish the work which He has given us to do. Until we engage in His work with the same passionate desire for its accomplishment as He showed when He came to be the sacrifice for our sins, we have not reached the standard of devotedness which is becoming to those whom Christ has sent. Our work will not be effectually done unless we engage in it in His spirit ; for in this, as in other departments of effort, the tardy and sluggish worker never realises success. And it is surely enough to make us earnest, cordial in our mission, not only that we have been appointed to it by Him who died for us, and came on His

mission with that intent, but that we are associated with Him who redeemed us, with the Lord of glory, in the great work for which He lived and died. He condescends to speak of us as bearing that relation to Himself in this matter which He bears to His Father; He draws a parallel between our case and His own; He speaks of our being sent in the same manner in which He Himself was, so investing us with the dignity of an ambassage like His own, and associating us with Himself in His work; and the honour thereby done to us should not only make us willing to accept, but glad to engage in, the mission to which He calls us, with all the sacrifices and labours it involves.

Although our immediate work is not the same as His, *it aims at the same ultimate object*—the bringing of the world to God. We are here expressly for the further carrying out of His great purpose, albeit by different means. His end is not to be completely achieved without human agency. And He appoints us to be His agents that we may work together with Him for the same end, as He was the Father's Agent for the realisation of the end which, in harmony with the Father and the Son, we have still to seek. For His department of the

work we are not competent, and happily, being perfectly finished already, it does not require to be done again. But we are competent for our own. For what He requires us to do is but in His strength to make application of, and bear testimony to, what He has already done. He has brought into our world God's message to man, revealing the feelings with which God regards His rebellious creatures; and it is our duty to publish that message. He has prepared the way of access to the Father through the rent veil,—that is to say, His flesh; and it is our duty to invite men to walk in it. He has originated and supplies the influence which is needed to bring men to God: our duty is to use the means of bringing that influence into contact with the hearts of men. He has provided all the blessings of salvation; and it is ours to proffer them for the acceptance of mankind. And if their tardiness to receive these blessings, and their evil treatment of both the message and the Messenger, makes us sometimes feel discouraged even in a work so honourable and glorious, let us remember for whom His mission was intended and in what spirit it was carried on; how He bore the contradiction of sinners against Himself; how He

came from heaven to earth, and laid down His life for those who were His enemies, and in whom He could discover nothing that was worthy of His love,—and we shall soon take to ourselves shame for being so easily discouraged, and be made to feel that it is not because of any good quality in others that we are to seek their welfare, but rather because they are guilty and wretched, and therefore objects of pity to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

We have only to add further that *our mission should be pursued with the same exclusive devotedness with which our Lord fulfilled His.* We say not, of course, that Christians should, after the manner of their Lord, eschew or forego all earthly possessions; for that would be to commit the not uncommon mistake of seeking conformity in the circumstances instead of in the principle and purpose of life,—the former being a much easier thing to be attained than the latter. But we do say that the aim of Christians ought not to be the acquisition of property or of any worldly advantage whatsoever, but a far higher end to which that and every other ought to be kept always in complete subordination. And further, that all property ac-

quired should be consecrated to, and valued chiefly in so far as it can be used for, the promotion of that end. Being here for the same purpose as our Master, we should not be greatly disappointed if we are here in our Master's condition. And at all events, we completely fail in the purpose of our mission if we allow our worldly concerns to usurp that place in our thoughts and affections which is due to His cause, and do not feel that all we have, as well as all we are, should be held absolutely at His disposal, and employed to any extent which may be necessary, and in the manner best adapted, to the extension of His kingdom in the earth. Say not that this is demanding too much. If we are sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world, our main business here should be the proper fulfilment of our mission. And it is a violation of reason, as well as of right, that any man should devote the greater part of his energy or his possessions to anything but that which is the business of his life.

Even life itself, as in our Lord's case, should be valued only as it can be made to further our mission. As He left the world when His work was done, so a proper estimate of the purpose for

which we are here would prevent our clinging to life after that purpose had been accomplished. Life would be valued by us not for its own sake, but because of what it enables us to do. And death would be little dreaded by us because of the conviction that our work was finished here, and that God meant us to do something for Him in other and higher spheres. If we really have a mission as Christ had, we may be sure that this alone is what determines the time of our death. The strongest is not taken away before his work is done, and the weakest has something to do so long as he is suffered to remain ; and though it may seem strange that the decrepid and bed-ridden should be regarded as having still a mission, it should be remembered that by patiently suffering a man may serve Christ as truly as by zealously doing—that the testimony borne by the infirm and the afflicted to the sustaining power of Divine grace, may be no less to the honour of Christ and the furtherance of His kingdom, than the testimony borne by the healthy and the active—even though they be preachers of the Gospel—to the extent of the Divine benevolence. Both kinds of testimony are valuable ; and those who can bear either may

feel assured that the Saviour's words apply to them: "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world."

The parallel between our Lord's sanctification, and that of His disciples, however, it should be remarked, is not complete in all particulars. In them it involves more than in Him. In Him the truth was not necessary to its promotion as it was in them. It is needful to instruct in Divine knowledge, in order to purify and perfect those who are ignorant, but no instruction is needed or possible in order to the perfection of the Holy One, who knoweth all things. Moreover, His consecration required, as its pre-requisite, no purifying process, nor any addition to the qualities which He already possessed: whereas, in us both are indispensable, in order that we may be qualified for the work to which we are called.

That which is consecrated to God's service must be pure. And while Christ is pure by nature, His disciples need to be purified. Hence His prayer for their consecration embraced their purification; their cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; their being sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the Word; their denying

themselves of all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world, in order that they might be qualified for being offered as sacrifices on the altar of consecration to His service. No unclean thing could be employed in temple worship under the old dispensation,—no blemished lamb or goat or bullock could be offered in sacrifice; and under the Christian no one is fitted for the great work of bringing men to God who cherisheth iniquity in his heart or putteth forth his hands to do evil.

Again, that which is consecrated to God's service ought also to be perfect. Our Saviour Himself was perfect. He was a lamb without spot or blemish. He offered Himself without spot unto God. He needed to acquire no qualities, for He was already possessed of all virtues and graces. Not so His people. Even if they are pure to the extent of neither loving nor practising any known sin, they are still lacking in many graces, and such as they possess exist only in imperfect degree. Hence His prayer for their sanctification involves their requisition of every Christian grace. *He* has no proper conception of God's service who can be content to serve Him with imperfect powers, for

One so infinitely excellent is worthy of our best capacities in their best state. Not only should they be pure, but adorned with every quality which can enhance their value, and commend them to the Divine approval. Silver and gold, not baser metals, were consecrated to nobler uses in the temple of old; and with the gold of sterling character, of a life adorned with every grace, and abounding in every fruit of the Spirit, should we seek the advancement of God's kingdom in the earth. While every evil should be abandoned, every virtue should be cultivated, by those who are consecrated as Christ was to the fulfilment of their great mission. Those who are sanctified, as He was, and like Him, devoted to God's service, and have qualified themselves, or rather have, by the Divine Spirit, been qualified, for that service, by the "putting off of the old man with his deeds, and the putting on of the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Our limited space prevents any remarks on the Word of God as the instrument of sanctification further than this, that if the disciples then needed its influence in order to the fulfilment of their

mission, we are certainly not so far advanced in holiness as to be able to dispense with it; and that if the comparatively small portion of the Word then enjoyed was possessed of sanctifying power, much more is that fuller and clearer revelation which we now enjoy fitted, when rightly used, to promote the sanctification of every child of God.

We must not overlook the manner in which our Lord appeals to His own sanctification as a reason why His prayer for theirs should be answered:—“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” This is His argument with the Father for their sanctification—an appeal to Him not to suffer His Son’s work to be in vain. Their sanctification was the end sought in His consecration to His great mission, and if they were not sanctified, the purpose of His mission would be frustrated; for if those whom he makes His own are not saved from their sins—if they are not restored to God, and consecrated to His service, where is the good of His having come? To what purpose are all His labours and privations and sufferings? This appeal could not be made in vain. The Father would not disregard His requests who pleaded

thus. And should not such an appeal have a mighty influence on our minds, constraining us to seek after the consecration for which it pleads? O, by all our love to Christ, by all the gratitude we cherish in return for what He has done, by all our admiration for the self-sacrificing benevolence which led Him to live and die on our account; by all these should we seek to have His desire fulfilled in our experience.

“Wearily for me Thou soughtest,
On the cross my soul Thou boughtest;
Lose not all for which Thou wroughtest!”

“Sanctify me through Thy truth: Thy word is truth!”



THE UNION OF THE DISCIPLES.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."—JOHN xvii. 20—23.

THE Lord here extends His prayer beyond those who were already His, to those who should after believe on Him through their word; and beyond them even, His desire glances to the world at large, and seeks blessings for them by which the world may profit. This prayer has reference both to the present and the future life. In the verses before us He asks what is good for them in time; and in those which follow what He desires for them in eternity. In reference to time, He prays for their oneness with each other as with

Himself, the Father, in order that the world may know, and believe in, His Divine mission. In reference to eternity, He prays that as those who are one with Himself they may behold and share His glory.

This prayer for their union, while it shows the importance which He attaches to it, shows also the nature of the union after which it behoves us to aspire.

It is no mere *mechanical union*, in which men without any uniting principle are bound together by some external tie, as when, for the prestige or the emoluments connected with it, men without any other uniting principle become members of the same ecclesiastical organisation. Such unions have been formed often enough, and gloried in as proofs of the scriptural character of the Church so constituted. Popery points exultingly to the variety of Protestant sects as contrasted with her own uniformity, although, notwithstanding her external union, and her attempts to suppress all freedom of thought in her adherents, she has been agitated by some of the fiercest controversies of modern times, and even now presents the spectacle of a body whose members are at war with each

other, some of them scarcely concealing, and others giving loud and articulate utterance, to their dissatisfaction with the dogmas imposed on them by their supreme head. Another Church, though Protestant herself, and so far sectarian, pleads her unity as opposed to the various sects with which she is surrounded; and yet she is notoriously composed of three or four great parties, who love each other as little as contending sects can, nay, regard each other with a degree of animosity all the more intense because of their close ecclesiastical relation, and have nothing in common save the external bond which keeps them members of the same ecclesiastical community. Whatever ends, politic or other, may be served by such enforced union, it is certainly not the oneness for which our Saviour prays. Then if the parties so united held no grounds of difference, but were sufficiently agreed to work together without discord in the societies of which they find themselves members, any one who reads the text can see that what our Lord seeks is something far deeper and more vital than any external union—a something of which external union may indeed become the visible result—but which external union does not

secure, and which may be frustrated instead of furthered, by attempts to promote external union where there is no oneness of principle and life. A cage full of heterogeneous animals, who would naturally tear and devour each other, kept from mutual assault by a plethora of food, or by dread of their common master, is not exactly a fit representation of the Church of Christ in her ideal state; rather is she like a family whose close external relations are the expression and result of their mutual love—a love which is stronger than they, and will survive the events by which they may be riven asunder.

It is not the union which is represented by *subscription to a common creed*, either when that creed is conscientiously held *ex animo*, which we fear is rarely the case, or where it is thoughtlessly adopted as the badge of the party with which the subscribers desire to unite. Whatever value may attach to a clear and well-defined system of doctrine as the basis of a sect, and as conserving the principles which its members unite to hold and teach, it is obviously something more than oneness of creed for which the Saviour here prays. Men may subscribe to the same articles of belief, and defend

them with a degree of zeal which amounts to intolerance, without knowing anything of what the Scripture calls the unity of the spirit. They may utter the same shibboleth of party, and impose its utterance on others at the peril of excommunication, and yet be strangers to the spiritual life from which all true Christian union springs. We admit that a common creed, springing from a common life—oneness of belief as the result of the teaching of the one Spirit by which all are actuated—would be invaluable as a testimony to the essential oneness of the children of God; but a creed enforced as the means of securing or promoting unity, is no better than the bond which binds together a number of dry and lifeless rods. The closeness and strength of the bond which unites them does nothing to make them one. They are as much separate units still as if they were lying far apart. Their union is purely artificial; useful perhaps for defensive, or even for aggressive, purposes, but having nothing in it of that oneness of spirit and life for which the Saviour prays, and which makes His disciples but one body. You may bind a bough to a tree by a tight mechanical tie, but your so binding it will never make it

become one with the tree. In order to that there must be such engraftation as will secure the life and sap of the tree circulating through the bough, and thus the oneness of life in them will make the two things organically and essentially one. Otherwise the tightness of your bond serves no good purpose, but proves seriously detrimental both to tree and bough. Just so a common life in healthy, vigorous condition, will make believers essentially one; but no oneness worthy of the name results from different parties being bound together by the tight ligaments of a rigid and minute creed, enforced by penalties which make men afraid to think, lest they should differ from its dogmas on the matters of which it treats. Our creeds are rather testimonies to our want of unity than signs of its existence; being attempts to secure by artificial means the result which would naturally follow were believers one with each other, as the Father and the Son are one. To bind men by creed is to show that you dare not trust for their oneness to the life they derive from union with their common Lord.

It is something more than that *union of courtesy* which Christians of different denominations some-

times form for mutual intercourse and co-operation in respect to matters on which they are agreed, hoping thereby, it may be, to promote their mutual welfare, and the cause which they have at heart. We dare not censure these attempts at union when consistently and earnestly made. They show a yearning after the state of things for which our Saviour prayed. They may in measure foster the spirit of union of which they attest the need. They are hopeful signs for the future of the Church. But after all they are but poor substitutes for that to which they point, and show us how far we are from the consummation which our text contemplates. The Evangelical Alliance, although the most considerable attempt of the kind which has been made, with its doctrinal basis, and avoidance of the topics on which its members differ, testifies to the want as well as to the wish. For who can suppose that a union which requires such conditions and restrictions will bear to be placed in comparison with that which subsists between the Divine Father and the Divine Son? The life which would secure union by naturally developing itself in union—what a different state of things it supposes, from that in which union requires to

be fostered by artificial means, and threatens to be dissolved if those means be not observed ! Your resort to doctrines and your avoidance of differences, are they not occasioned by the lack of that life which would enable you to discuss your differences in a friendly spirit, until through your mutual intercourse you were brought to be one in faith as in feeling ? Your requirement of a doctrinal belief in addition to the possession of spiritual life, is it not because you do not perceive that fulness of life on which you can rely to make its possessors one—swallowing up any other feeling in its abounding love for Christ and for all who are Christ-like ? Your fear to touch on questions where there is disagreement, is it not owing to your consciousness that the spiritual bond which unites you is so weak that it will bear but little stress and strain, and requires, like a hothouse plant, to be nursed and fostered by artificial appliances ? We blame you not that you are so careful of that which you value. We only wish that, owing to its robust and vigorous condition, it required less of your fostering care. Such dread of disrupting existing ties will cease when our Saviour's prayer has been fully realised—“That they all may be one ; as Thou,

Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us—I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one"—because the closest union will then be found to be a necessity of the abounding spiritual life.

It is a *spiritual and essential union*—a union not in form or appearance merely, nor a union effected by any external bonds, but a union which consists in their being brought into the same spiritual relation and made partakers of the same spiritual life. It finds its type in that which exists between the Father and the Son. It is the same in nature, if, owing to the finite capacity of the creature, it cannot be the same in extent. It is to be effected by Christ dwelling in His people, as the Father dwells in Him. Just as the Father by the Spirit is in Him, and actuates Him continually, so that there can be no schism or variance between the two, so Christ is by His Spirit to dwell in His people, actuating them continually, so that there shall be no schism or variance between Him and them, but He himself shall be the soul of their life, and they in consequence shall think and feel and act in harmony with Him; and as they are all thus one with Him, so shall they be one

with each other—like a body whose different members but one soul actuates,—“perfect in one.”

According to this the union desired is that *fullness of spiritual life* which shall make them one in feeling and purpose—essentially one, whether or not they be found in the same organizations, and bound together by the same outward tie. These are but secondary considerations. The great thing is that the same life shall fill and actuate them all—that Christ shall be in them in such measure as shall make the life of any one of them the result of those inspirations and influences which proceed from His indwelling; each one being on that account essentially in harmony with every other. The measure of our spiritual life is the measure of Christ’s indwelling. In proportion as He is in us, in every thought and feeling and word and deed, in accordance with the Divine will, and directed to the Divine glory; in proportion are we all that He desires us to become. There is no schism or disunion in the body when all its members are thus inspired, because all are then actuated by the same spirit, conformed to the same standard, consecrated to the same end. It is our want of spiritual life which occasions our divisions.

We keep aloof from and quarrel with each other because we are far away from our Master, and because the want of His inspiring and controlling influences leaves scope for the selfishnesses which jar and clash and so tear asunder the body of Christ. His inspiration and control being the same in every one, prevent, just in so far as they exist, the discords which divide us, and cause us all to agree with and cling to each other. And when He is in us, as the Father was in Him, moving us continually so that in none of us is there any purpose or desire apart from Him, and all our acts are the consequence of His impulses, then is our union without either break or defect—we are perfected into one.

Of course this oneness of life must become visible both in utterance and action. Two men so endowed, wherever they meet, will feel themselves to be one, simply because the same Lord dwells in them both. Any number of men on the same principle will feel their oneness. The tie which binds them together is closer and stronger and more vital than that which binds the members of any earthly society, superior to all external bonds of union. There may not be among them exact

agreement of thought on all matters; for even Christ's indwelling does not destroy man's freedom of thought, or obliterate his idiosyncrasy. But though some things may be seen in different light, and differently estimated according to the standpoint and mental peculiarity of the parties, yet inasmuch as what we hold is determined very much by how we feel, there will be a considerable approach to unanimity of sentiment, and, moreover, there will be no clashing or contradiction even in their differences. Not only will their variety of views be amicably held and cordially allowed, but beneath the superficial diversity there will be essential agreement, and their differences will be only like the varied sounds in a well-trained choir which go to make up a harmonious whole. Even to the world they will appear one, because they will all hold the same fundamental principle, notwithstanding their occasional variations of opinion, and be all manifestly actuated by the same life.

Harmony of action there will be, as well as of utterance. The same life in all will lead them to aim at the same great purpose. And though, in accordance with the several peculiarities, there

may be different methods adopted for its attainment, these will lead to no alienation of feeling, but will be welcomed by all as co-operating harmoniously for the same end. The oneness implies no monotonous order. It leads not to any dead level of uniformity. For it is a oneness of life, and acts with the freedom which is life's characteristic, running out into harmonious variety ; just as the life in nature runs out into grass and flower and tree, and makes neither blade of grass, nor flower petal, nor tree leaf exactly the counterpart of its neighbour, and yet amid all the diversity preserves the unity of life. Diversity in unity—such is the order of spiritual life. Saints may be “distinct as the billow, yet one as the sea.” They are like a body whose various members, though differing in appearance, have but one life in them ; and each performing its own functions co-operates harmoniously with all the others for the same great end. They quarrel not though they differ ; but, actuated by the one life, the peculiarities of each harmonise with these of others, and all are welcomed and utilised for the furtherance of their common aim.

The Saviour not only prays for this union of

His disciples, but for this end also ; He tells us He had given them the glory which the Father gave to Him : " And the glory which Thou gavest me, " I have given them ; that they may be one, even as We are one." What is this glory ? Was the union itself the glory ? Was the glory which He gave them the privilege of being united with each other, and with Himself as He was with the Father ? Or was the glory a something else conferred on them with a view to the promotion of their union ? Was it the glory of being sent on a mission by Him as He was sent on a mission by the Father ? Or was it the glory of being taken into the same relation with Himself as He had with the Father ?—the thought of being identified with Him as He was with the Father, and with the Father through Him ? Or was it the glory which He enjoys in heaven, and in which believers share ?

Different interpreters answer these questions in different manner : and it is not for us to be positive, where there are no very clear data on which to found our conclusions. One thing, however, we can very well understand, how common privilege consciously enjoyed is conducive to one-

ness of spirit. The sense of favour bestowed on the various members of a community may be so strong as to awaken the gratitude which swallows up every other feeling, and makes them rejoice together as the heirs of a common inheritance. The honour which has been put upon them all alike, makes them feel that they are one. All differences disappear or become as nothing in comparison with the grace which they have all received. So was it with the disciples after our Lord's ascension. The love which characterised the early Church was no doubt awakened by their sense of a common privilege and obligation. Rejoicing in the deliverance which they had all experienced, procured for them by the same precious blood of Christ, and in the privileges of sonship in the Divine family, and the prospect of a glorious inheritance procured by the same means, they felt that that which made them one, was infinitely greater than anything which could distinguish or keep them apart. And thus the tide of their mutual love rose, until it swallowed up every other feeling, mastered the instinct of possession which is so strong in our nature, and found its fitting expression in their renunciation of property and

formation of a community of goods, out of which distribution was made to every man according as he had need. Something like this may be what our Lord intended in the words before us. The glory which he gave them may have been designed as an unspeakably valuable possession, to awaken in them feelings which would swallow up all their selfishness and jealousies, and make them think nothing of the things which distinguished them in comparison with that in which they were one. Certainly a clear realisation and proper estimate of our Christian privileges is fitted to have this effect. We should, as Christians, be less separated from each other, did we think more of the great things we possess in common : the precious blood which has bought us—the precious faith of which we are all partakers—the precious promises addressed to us all—the glorious position we occupy as sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty—the blessed hope by which we are all animated: all these are fitted to make us one—one in feeling and in thought—one in the spirit and the purpose of our life.

Our Lord contemplates two effects on the world, which would result from this union of His disciples.

The world might thereby see that the Father loved them as He loved Him. Forming one body with each other and the Saviour, they would be manifestly designed for one destiny, and folded in the embrace of the same Eternal Love. As united to Him and parts of Him—His body, the feelings with which the Father regarded Him, would, in measure, be extended to them. And even the world might see that a community of which Christ Himself was the animating spirit and life, was the subject of an Eternal Divine decree; and could not fail to be with Christ for ever, sharer in whatever honours and blessings the Father had given Him to enjoy.

The world also might thereby be led to know and believe in His Divine mission: “That the world may believe—that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me.” There are two ways in which we can conceive of this end being promoted by their union. In the first place the *united action* of the whole body of the faithful for the propagation of the truth, would have a mighty effect in making men acquainted with, and securing their reception of, the Gospel of Christ. We can hardly imagine the effect which would be produced in this way, if,

instead of the frequently clashing movements which now neutralize each other,—the wasting of strength in sectarian quarrels and crusades and other selfish schemes,—the whole energies and appliances of the Church, with the devotedness which the Saviour's indwelling would secure, and with the unanimity which would flow from His oneness, were made to co-operate for the one great end of winning the world to Him. In the second place, the *moral influence* of His union could not fail to produce a mighty effect in commanding His message to the world. The testimony it would bear to the working of the one Divine Spirit would be the best evidence of the Divine origin of the Gospel; and would do more than *all* the books we can write to defend the truth against the infidel assaults to which it is now exposed. And the power of such a vast body of men, breathing but one spirit, actuated by one motive, seeking one end, backing the same thing, proving by their resemblance of character that they are possessed of the same life—the moral power of such a community backing up the message which with one voice they proclaimed, if it did not at once bear down all opposition, would at least greatly expedite the bringing of the world to Christ.

Let us remember that this blessed result, with the union which will lead to it, was what our Saviour contemplated in this prayer. It must be an affecting thought to those who truly love Him, that He sought this, and that what He sought, has, as yet, been only so partially realised. How must it grieve Him, that that which He so earnestly and touchingly prayed for, has been so long postponed! With what feelings must He look on those who stand in the way of such a desirable consummation! Surely of all ways of offending Him, there is none which He will more indignantly resent, than that which operates as a barrier to the union of His people. A terrible responsibility must rest on those who do anything to prevent His disciples becoming thoroughly and manifestly one. And those who occupy positions of influence in the Church, would do well to see to it, lest by fostering an exclusive spirit, they do anything on any pretext whatever to hinder the union for which our Saviour prays. Any worldly alliance which is formed—any alteration of Gospel ordinances—any assertion of undue and exclusive claims—any establishment of an arbitrary standard, which leads to this, must, in view of this prayer, be regarded as a terrible

crime, to be visited with a no less terrible penalty. And happy is that man whose conscience is void of offending in this matter,—who, careful himself to act in accordance with the principles of the New Testament, is yet ready to unite as far as is possible with every one in whom he beholds the spirit of Christ.



WITH CHRIST, BEHOLDING HIS GLORY.

" Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me : for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee : but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou has sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it : that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."—JOHN xvii. 24—26.

THE Saviour now turns to the future world, and as He has prayed for the union of His disciples here, so He now prays that they may dwell in His presence, and enjoy the vision of His glory, there. The twenty-fourth verse contains this prayer, and the two following verses give reasons for the prayer being answered.

These closing words are both affecting and instructive. They give us an insight into the tender love with which He regards His own ; and assure us of their future glory. There can be

no doubt either of the place which they have in His heart, or of their future admission to the enjoyments and glories of heaven, of whom He says, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me : for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.”

The prayer is remarkable not only for the nature of His request, but also for the tone in which it is proffered. There is a familiarity and a confidence in it such as does not become any merely human pleader, and yet, as we have remarked on other parts, it breathes a spirit of profoundest reverence. There is, “*Father, I will,*” and there is a claim to glory which He desires His disciples to behold. But there is also, “*O righteous Father,*” as if He who can speak to God as no mortal can, and present claims to which no mortal can aspire, would yet show us the reverent spirit in which God should be approached and addressed.

The admission of the disciples to His presence is the great object of His prayer. He will have them to be where He is. A most remarkable petition, surely, with which to close His inter-

cession on their behalf. For what or who is He, that their being with Him should be deemed so desirable? Ah! is it not in these utterances that we obtain glimpses into His true character, and learn how essentially Divine He is? No creature, whether human or angelic, would think of presenting such a prayer on behalf of others. They could not presume to speak of admission to their presence as the consummation of others' blessedness. It is only this Divine One who speaks of heaven as being where He Himself is. His promise to His disciples, made on the evening when he uttered this prayer, is, "I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am, ye may be also." His promise to the dying thief, made not long afterwards, is, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." Without presumption, He thus assumes that all blessedness is to be found in nearness to Himself—that He is the centre round which all creatures should move.

And strange as it may seem to others, those who have a right acquaintance with Him, find in their hearts a response to His words, and gladly endorse His lofty claims. Heaven to every Christian is, as regards locality, the place in which Christ

is. To be with Him is to be in heaven, no matter where: for though the place where He is will no doubt be glorious, it is not the glory but the presence which makes it attractive to the believing soul. Paul's desire when in a strait betwixt two was, to depart and be with Christ, which was far better than earthly life under any possible conditions. He exulted in the prospect of being "absent from the body and present with the Lord." Stephen, in his martyrdom, receives consolation from his vision of the Saviour's form, and is content to breathe the prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The assurance with which the Apostle comforts those whose friends have been removed is, that they sleep in Jesus, and that those who are gone and those who remain shall yet "be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they be ever with the Lord." And still this dwelling in His presence is the hope of all His saints. For the lack of this nothing would compensate. The presence of neither the best of men nor the loftiest of angels would be deemed a sufficient substitute for His. No material splendour, no source of enjoyment, no exalted com-

panionship or occupation, would make them content with a place from which His presence was withdrawn. The light of ten thousand suns would be darkness to them, compared with the shining of His countenance. The presence of all that is great and good in the universe would be poor and mean, compared with His person. With one consent they testify,—

“Thy presence makes our paradise,
And where Thou art is heaven.”

Now, to suppose that all this can be true of any mere creature, is to evince the grossest incredulity. The charm of His presence is in this: that He is the human embodiment of all Divine attributes,—the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,—the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

This appears still more clearly, when we see the purpose for which He desires to have them with Himself: “*that they may behold My glory.*” What kind of a being can He be in whose lips such words suggest no thought of unbecoming egotism? with whose general character and claims they appear to be in strictest harmony? How it would startle us, were an apostle to offer such a prayer, even on

behalf of those who had been converted through his instrumentality: "*May be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.*" The utterance of such a prayer would make us feel instantly, that, whatever his past labours, the man by his arrogance had forfeited all title to our respect. And yet the language is felt to be perfectly natural and becoming to our Lord. It does not lower in the smallest degree our estimate of His character. It reveals to us no new and startling quality with which that estimate is at variance. It is strictly in harmony with His whole life. And it is so, and can be so, only, we repeat, because of the superhuman and Divine qualities by which He is distinguished. He can speak in this fashion with all propriety, and He only, who was "*in the beginning with God and was God.*"

In speaking of His glory, His mind advert to His previous existence, and the glory He then enjoyed comes before Him as the reason for the request He has proffered: "*That they may behold My glory: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.*" As if He were to say: "In speaking of My glory, I am putting forth no unfounded claim; for I have had glory with Thee

throughout past ages ; Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. I had glory with Thee then. My desire is, that when I return to that glory, those whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me to behold it."

It is a most gracious request. Even our Lord could scarcely desire for His disciples a greater boon. That they, poor toil-worn sons of earth, should be translated to that region where He appears in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and in the superadded glory which is the reward of His mediatorial work, and should behold Him in all the splendour of His exaltation as He stands revealed to the inhabitants of heaven, and dwell for ever in His immediate presence, known and honoured as those who were associated with Him on earth—what greater honour could He desire for them ! Bound to Him by the tenderest ties, won by the godlike qualities which He displayed even in His humiliation, so attached to Him even in His poverty and obscurity, when He was despised and rejected of men, that they were ready to go to prison or to death for His sake ; what joy must it be to them when their eyes shall behold Him occupying the position of which their

hearts, no doubt, pronounce Him worthy, but of whose grandeur they could not have conceived—see Him who was their own Friend and companion, associated with them in their privations and wanderings, standing amidst the glories of heaven, and at home among them as one who had seen them before ! And what an indication it is of the strength of His attachment to them, that He desires to have them with Him there ! He is about to leave them, but He will not leave them until He prays and arranges to have them again gathered round Himself. They have not been very tractable or faithful companions ; their waywardness, and petulance, and blindness, and self-seeking, have tried Him not a little. He has had much to bear with them. But they have left all and followed Him ; and He will not be separated from them now, without first providing for their future reunion. There are companions enough where He is going, by nature and character and capacity far superior to them, who, if they may not be admitted to familiar intercourse with Him, will yet bow before Him to adore His perfections and celebrate His deeds of love. But nevertheless, He will not have *them* absent. Even in His glory, when surrounded and adored by all

the angelic hosts, He wants them to be near Him. He would miss them amid all the splendours of heaven's scenes and society, just as a mother in some brilliant circle which had combined to do her honour, would miss the children whom she longed to see by her side. Rash, impulsive, blundering Peter, the ambitious sons of Zebedee, obtuse Philip, and sceptical unbelieving Thomas, and all the others with all their manifold failings—He would have them all beside Himself when He enters into the glory of His kingdom; for His is a heart which never forgets the slightest service rendered to Him, but rewards even a cup of cold water given in His name; and because, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end—through all the changes of life, and all the cycles of the coming eternity.

If we do not lay stress in the "*I will*" of the text as expressive of determination, knowing that the same word might with equal propriety be rendered *I desire*, we do, nevertheless, recognise the tone of confidence which it breathes that His prayer will be answered. It is enough that He should *will* or *desire* their presence with Himself

in order to its being secured ; for Him the Father heareth always. His desire is in harmony with the Father's own purpose. Their wills are one. Hence it is enough to assure us of their final glorification, that He should say, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." And the tone in which it is uttered shows that such was His own assurance. He speaks as one who knows that what He desires the Father will grant—yea, He speaks as one who has a right to that which He asks; albeit He breathes the most reverent spirit towards the Father and the most perfect harmony with the Father's will. He does not need to establish His right, for that right is not questioned. He does not conceive of any difference between the Father and Himself — any reluctance on the Father's part to grant Him His desire. He says, *I will*, or *I desire*, with the full assurance that so it shall be.

In the same confidence, without any feeling of uncertainty, though in the most reverent spirit, He proceeds in the following verses to make statements which show the fitness of His prayer. The

Father's rectitude presents itself to His mind, confirming the confidence with which He has expressed His desire. "*O righteous Father,*" is the ground of His assurance that it will be as He has prayed. The righteous Father will not fail to fulfil the desire which is in harmony with His own. The righteous Father will not fail to admit to the glory of His Son those whom His Son has chosen, and has prepared, and is preparing, for that destiny. He has qualified them for it, and will further qualify them, so that it shall assuredly be theirs.

They were not like others, but were distinguished from all others by their knowledge of God. "*The world hath not known thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.*" The world, because of its ignorance of God, could not enter heaven nor behold the glory of the Redeemer. But it was otherwise with the disciples. The knowledge of the Father which was in Himself, He had communicated to His chosen, who, knowing Him as the sent of God, knew the Father also; and by this knowledge were qualified for dwelling in His presence and beholding His glory.

He thus virtually makes the future destiny of men hinge upon their knowledge of Himself. As in the opening of the prayer He made the eternal life of believers consist in their knowledge of the Father and Himself, so here He assents to the exclusion from heaven of the world, who, because of not recognising His mission, are destitute of the knowledge of the true God. The Father can only be known through the Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Not to recognise the Saviour's mission, according to this, is to be ignorant of God—debarred from the enjoyment and glories of heaven. It is not a trifling mistake, by which a man's condition is not vitally affected, but a fundamental and fatal error, affecting ruinously both his relation to God and his prospects for the future. Even the Saviour does not plead for their admission to heaven who continue to ignore or to deny His claims. He acquiesces in the decree which pronounces them unfit for, and therefore excluded from, its enjoyment. In pleading for the admission of His

disciples, He mentions the distinction between them and the world in a manner which shows His recognition of the fitness and the justice of the world's being shut out. The world can neither know God, nor be meetened for heaven, while it rejects Him ; and the same righteousness of God which secures the admission of His disciples, forbids the world's entrance there. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee ; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me." The poor world, continuing as it is, is thus set aside even by the mercy which pleads so lovingly and powerfully for the disciples. The blinded world is given over to reap the consequences of its voluntary blindness. The proud unbelieving world is shut out from the everlasting life, which can only be found in Him whom it rejects. "The world hath not known Thee, though I have come to teach it. It will not receive Me as coming forth from Thyself." This, from the lips of that pleader, is the sentence which seals the world's doom.

On the other hand, the disciples' reception of Himself secured their admission on the ground of the Divine rectitude. For, had they not im-

plicitly received His words as God's messenger, and trusted in His promises? And will the righteous Father dishonour His Son by falsifying the hopes He inspired, and showing that He had duped men by promises that were groundless? Had not their reception of Christ, as the revealer of the Father, awakened in them filial feelings of love and confidence? Were they not in consequence rejoicing in the Divine friendship? And would the righteous Father ruthlessly crush those filial feelings by casting off those who clung to Him? No; the Saviour knew how far such a proceeding was from the Divine rectitude; and with confidence expresses His desire that those whom He has chosen may be with Him where He is, that they may behold His glory.

He intimates in the closing verse how He had revealed to them the Father, and would yet reveal Him, in order to secure this result. "*I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it.*" The Father's name is His character; and this is the Saviour's testimony to the revelations of the Father which He had given them, so making them partakers of that eternal life which consists

in the knowledge of God; and His promise that clearer and fuller revelations will yet be given. The Divine name is not to be learned in a day, and indeed, we may say, not even in a lifetime. It will require an eternity to spell out its various letters. Even with Christ as our teacher, we cannot learn it all at once. For although He who dwelt in the Father's bosom, and is one with Him, knows what is in the Father's heart, He cannot make that manifest fully to a finite capacity. And even with such a Divine and infallible teacher, therefore, we are required constantly to learn. We must add to our knowledge while life lasts —must press on to know more and yet more of what God is—and even our eternity will be spent in the same exercise, and its revolving cycles will bear testimony to our increasing acquaintance with the Divine.

The Saviour secures this for His disciples. As He has declared, so He will declare, the Father's name. Right feelings towards God will be fostered by the revelations with which He is continually favouring us. Our spiritual life will be maintained and increased by augmentations of the knowledge from which it springs. Profounder

reverence, more ardent love, more implicit trust, more cheerful obedience, will be promoted by our larger acquaintance with Divine things. The joy which thrilled through our being when the unveiling of our Father's countenance wakened in us the first stirrings of spiritual life—the joy which has often been received and increased as we discovered some new feature of the Divine character, or understood better those which were previously seen—will still be replenished by the same process of instruction from which it has sprung. For He in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, can make us accurately and increasingly acquainted with all Divine things. We shall not fail to learn with such a teacher. With such a revealer we shall not fail to see. The unspelt words, the yet illegible letters, of our Father's name, will all be made plain to us, when He declares them in measure suited to our strengthening spiritual discernment. A greater fulness of life—a fulness of joy and love and devotion—will yet be ours, as He fulfils in our experience the engagement He makes with His Father in this memorable prayer. O blessed Saviour! help us to understand and appreciate Thy promise made on an occasion

so solemn—the promise uttered in Thy Father's ear, “I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it!”

The connection of this promise with the prayer is found in its effect on the mind of the disciples—*“that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”* These words describe a state of mind in harmony with heaven's occupations, and especially with their being where Christ is to behold His glory. The love of the Father for the Son being in them, may be either objectively or subjectively understood. That is, we may either understand the love as being *perceived* by them, or as being *shared* by them. In the first case, their knowledge of how the Father loved the Son, would give them a right conception of Christ, and of the condescension and grace which the Father had shown in parting with one so beloved on their account. Thus would right feelings be awakened in them, both towards Christ and the Father—feelings which would fit them for dwelling in the Saviour's presence and beholding His glory—uniting in the adoration which is paid to Him by all the hosts of heaven. They can join in angelic worship, who have a right apprehension of the

feelings with which the Father regarded the Son when He sent Him forth on His voluntary mission to seek and to save the lost. To both Father and Son will they gladly ascribe the homage which is due, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." In the second case—and this is the interpretation of the words we prefer—the feeling with which the Father regarded the Son is in measure shared in by the disciples. They love Christ as the Father loved Him. The love of the Father for Him has found a place in their hearts. In small measure only, of course, can this be true. But a little of the infinite flame—but a faint spark from it—can have a place in our hearts, or be cherished by our finite faculties. Still, though so small in degree, it is of the same nature. The spark and the flame are one. Our feelings towards Christ harmonise with the feelings with which the Father regarded Him. We think of Him, not as the world thinks, but with thoughts in harmony with the Father's own. We feel towards Him, not as the world feels, but with feelings which the Father inspires, and which, though partaking of the limitation of the creature, are in

harmony with His own ineffable love. He is our beloved,—chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, as He is the Father's only begotten and beloved Son. He is to us the sum and centre of all perfection, as He is the object of the Father's complacent regard—“with whom He is well pleased.” His name, which is dear to the Father, is to us as “ointment poured forth.” And as the Father hath set Him on high at His own right hand, and given Him a name which is above every name, so do our hearts gladly respond, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing.” This is the feeling the Saviour promotes in us by continuing to declare unto us the Father's name, thus fostering our spiritual life, and preparing us for dwelling in His presence.

The result of all is His own indwelling—“*and I in them.*” Whatever view we take of the foregoing words, we can see how this results from what is there said. He is in those to whom He is so precious ; and equally is He in those who know the love wherewith the Father loved Him—*in them*, as the soul is in a living frame, dwelling

in the centre of their being, moving, yea furnishing all the springs of their life, supreme in their affections, foremost in their thoughts, determining their character, the source and the end of all they do and say, "the Alpha and the Omega" of their existence, "All and in all."

This secures the fulfilment of the highest desire he expresses on their behalf. There were no rectitude in God's government, no truth in God's Word, no faithfulness or reliability in God's dealings, if those in whom the Saviour thus dwells were not to be with Him where He is, that they may behold His glory.

In conclusion, we cannot hope that we have brought out all the meaning of this parting prayer; but we have found matter in it, we trust, for very profitable reflection. Of all the inspired writings, even of all our Lord's recorded utterances, it is the most precious. The insight which it gives us into His loving heart endears it to all who are His. We can form some estimate of the intercession for us which He carries on in heaven, when we study this specimen of His pleading, and, learning what a privilege it is to have such a high-

priest over the house of God, we can draw near to God with a true heart in the full assurance of faith. May this be one result of our meditations ! May they lead us more than ever to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need ! "

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